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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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WB gives Rs 2L aid to kin of those killed during rains

KOLKATA, 24 SEPT

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who lost their lives in rain-related incidents in the state. While defending her government's handling of the unprecedented rainfall that left Kolkata and adjoining areas waterlogged, Banerjee blamed the Centre for not dredging the Ganga and accused Metro Railways of worsening the flooding in Salt Lake through its ongoing construction activities. At least 10 people have died since Tuesday due to rainfall-related incidents in the state. Of them, nine were electrocuted in Kolkata after coming in contact with unattended or open electric wires amid waterlogging, officials said. She also urged the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, the electricity provider in Kolkata, to provide Rs 5 lakh as compensation.—*PTI*

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CDS Gen Chauhan's tenure extended by 8 months

IMPHAL, 24 SEPT

Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan's tenure has been extended up to May next year, the government said on Wednesday. Gen Chauhan's current stint as the top military officer is scheduled to end on 30 September. The defence ministry said the government has approved the extension of service of Gen Chauhan as Chief of Defence Staff and Secretary, Department of Military Affairs, up to 30 May next year or until further orders, whichever is earlier. He has been serving as the Chief of Defence Staff since 30 September, 2022. —*PTI*

India mocks Pak for 'bombing it own civilians'

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

At the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), India urged Pakistan to focus on fixing its fragile economy and improving its human rights record rather than harbouring terrorists and targeting its own citizens, in an apparent reference to the recent explosion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that killed 24 people. Kshitij Tyagi, Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission in Geneva, accused Pakistan for misusing the forum with baseless and provocative statements against India. He argued that Islamabad should turn its focus inwards. —*ANI*

Assam CM orders SIT to investigate Zubeen's death

GUWAHATI, 24 SEPT

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday directed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the death of singer Zubeen Garg, who drowned on 19 September, while swimming in Singapore. The controversy deepened when it was revealed that Garg had declined to wear a life jacket during the session. Viscera samples will be sent to the Central Forensic Laboratory in Delhi for examination. The state CID is already investigating the case following more than 60 FIRs filed against organisers of the festival where Garg was scheduled to perform. A second postmortem of Garg's body was conducted. —*PTI*

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X needs to be regulated: K'taka HC bins plea, backs govt censorship

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Karnataka High Court on Wednesday rejected a petition by X Corp, which challenged the authority of Indian officials to issue takedown orders under the Information Technology Act.

Justice M Nagaprasanna upheld the Centre's power to regulate social media and dismissed X Corp's claim that only Section 69A of the IT Act permits content blocking. The court ruled that Section 79(3)(b) also authorises such orders when intermediaries fail to act on unlawful content flagged by the government.

"Social media needs to be regulated, especially in cases involving offences against women," the court said, adding that India cannot be treated as a "mere playground" for unchecked information dissemination.

X Corp had sought protection from any coercive action, including non-participation in the government's censorship coordination platform, 'Sahyog'. However, the court upheld the portal's legality, calling it "a mechanism to combat cybercrime and a beacon of cooperation between citizens and intermediaries."

- The court criticised X Corp for complying with takedown orders in the US, where violation is criminalised, but resisting similar orders here. "This sans countenance," the judge said

The court criticised X Corp for complying with takedown orders in the US, where violation is criminalised, but resisting similar orders in India. "This sans countenance," the judge said, concluding the petition lacked merit.

The bench also stressed that freedom of expression must coexist with responsibility. "Unregulated speech under the guise of liberty becomes lawlessness. Liberty must be yoked with responsibility," it said.

The ruling came after X challenged takedown orders linked to posts about a stampede at New Delhi Railway Station.

"Every platform operating in India must submit to its laws. The rule of law and social harmony cannot be imperilled," the court concluded, rejecting all related applications. —*PTI*

4 killed as Ladakh stir turns deadly; Sonam ends strike

Curfew on after violence in statehood protest

LEH, 24 SEPT

Ladakh witnessed its worst violence in recent memory on Wednesday as the ongoing statehood movement spiralled into arson and street clashes, leaving four people dead and at least 45 injured, including 22 police personnel.

The unrest followed weeks of peaceful protests, led by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who called off his 15-day hunger strike as violence erupted. The shutdown in Leh began early, with hundreds taking to the streets. By afternoon, the BJP office and several vehicles were vandalised and set ablaze, sending plumes of smoke over the city.

Police fired teargas shells and opened fire to disperse crowds after protesters turned violent. Authorities imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), banning gatherings of five or more people.

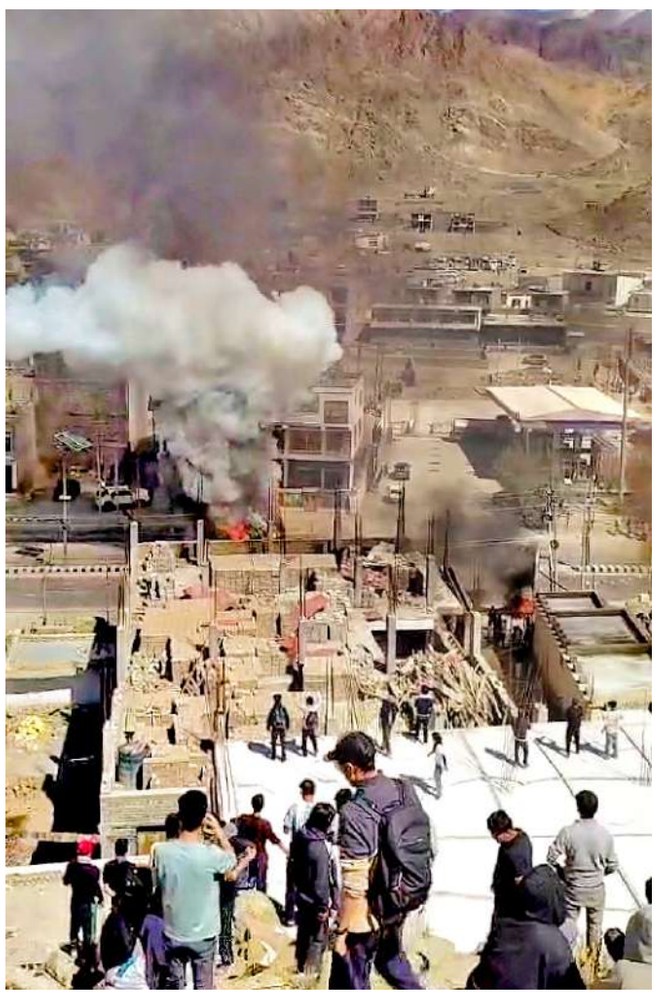
Officials said the situation remains tense, with several injured in critical condition, raising fears the death toll may rise.

The protest was spearheaded by the youth wing of the Ladakh Apex Body (LAB) after two hunger strikers, part of a 35-day fast since 10 September, were hospitalised on Tuesday evening. Their four-point demand includes statehood, inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule, separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil, and job reservation for locals.

Congress leader and councillor Phuntsog Stanzin Tsepag was booked for an allegedly provocative speech at the hunger strike venue.

Appealing for calm, Wangchuk said, "This is not what we stood for. I'm breaking my fast and urge everyone to return to peace and dialogue."

Heavy deployment of police and paramilitary forces continues across Leh. —*PTI*



Smoke billows from a structure set ablaze by miscreants amid a massive protest in Leh, Ladakh, on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Zelenskyy backs India while China fumes at Trump's tirade

WASHINGTON/BEIJING, 24 SEPT

China has sharply criticised the US over its tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy countered US President Donald Trump's claim that India is a primary funder of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy, speaking to Fox News, said, "I think India is mostly with us. Yes, we have questions on energy, but I believe President Trump can manage it with Europeans and build closer ties with India." He expressed hope that India would reassess its stance on Russian energy with diplomatic intervention.

Trump, addressing the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, accused India and China of bankrolling Russia's war through oil imports. He imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods, taking the total US levies on India to 50 per cent—among the highest globally.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy **PHOTO: PTI**

Responding from Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun dismissed Trump's criticism, highlighting that "most countries, including the US and EU, continue to trade with Russia." He defended China's oil trade with Moscow as compliant with WTO rules and warned of countermeasures if US actions affected Chinese interests.

Zelenskyy, while criticising China for not actively supporting peace, said, "If China truly wanted the war to stop, it could compel Moscow. Without China, Putin's Russia is nothing." India has defended its oil imports from Russia as driven by national interest and economic logic. —*PTI*

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At CWC meet, Congress hints at Tejaswi being Bihar CM face

PATNA, 24 SEPT

Senior Congress leader Pawan Khera on Wednesday hinted that the party is comfortable with RJD's **Tejashwi Yadav** as the chief ministerial face of the INDIA bloc in Bihar, while stopping short of a formal declaration.

Speaking to reporters during the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting in Patna, Khera said, "When the Sun is shining bright in the sky, you do not need to declare it," when asked about the Congress's reluctance to name Tejashwi as its CM face.

However, the lack of explicit endorsement has raised questions, especially as Tejashwi launched his solo Bihar Adhikar Yatra shortly after completing the Voter Adhikar Yatra with Rahul Gandhi. Despite SIR (Special Intensive Revision) and "vote theft" being central poll issues, Tejashwi has so far avoided mentioning them in his solo rally, choosing instead to focus on people-centric problems such as unemployment, migration, corruption, and lack of industrial growth. "At every stop, we talk about real issues, jobs, poverty, education, health. Let them (BJP) talk about Hindu-Muslim," Tejashwi told supporters on Friday.

Meanwhile, tensions have reportedly emerged within the INDIA bloc over seat sharing, with the Congress demanding over 100 seats, a position the RJD is resisting due to Congress's poor performance in 2020. In the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, the RJD contested 144 seats and won 75, while the Congress contested 70 but managed to win only 19. The alliance fell short of a majority. —*PTI*

Cong's fight for '2nd freedom struggle'

The Congress held its CWC meeting at Sadaqat Ashram in Patna, a symbolic site once home to Dr Rajendra Prasad and a meeting place for Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru during the freedom struggle. Located by the Ganges, the choice is deliberate. By gathering here amid allegations of voter theft, the Congress is subtly framing its campaign as a "second freedom struggle" to protect democracy and Constitution.—*Salar News*

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'MOLESTER' BABA ON THE RUN

17 women accuse Delhi 'godman' of sexual abuse

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Swami Chaitanyananda Saraswati, a self-styled godman linked to a reputed religious organisation, is accused of sexual harassment by over 17 female students at the Sri Sharada Institute of Indian Management in Delhi's Vasant Kunj.

- He allegedly sent obscene WhatsApp messages, made physical advances and used his power to coerce students.

The accused allegedly sent obscene WhatsApp messages, made unwanted physical advances, and used his influence to coerce students, many of whom belong to economically weaker sections. Faculty members reportedly pressured students to comply. Three women faculty members are also under investigation for allegedly abetting the accused.

This is not Saraswati's first brush with the law. Police records show a fraud and molestation case against him in 2009 at Defence Colony and another molestation complaint in 2016 at Vasant Kunj.

Police have recorded statements from 32 students on EWS scholarships, with 17 confirming sexual misconduct.

Saraswati is currently absconding, with his last known location traced to Agra. A manhunt is underway, including airport surveillance and raids. Digital evidence, including call logs and messages, has been secured.

The Sri Sharada Peetham in Sringeri, Karnataka, has severed all ties with Saraswati, condemning his actions and distancing itself from the scandal. —*PTI*

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STATE HONOURS FOR CREMATION

Padma Bhushan Kannada novelist Bhyrappa no more

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

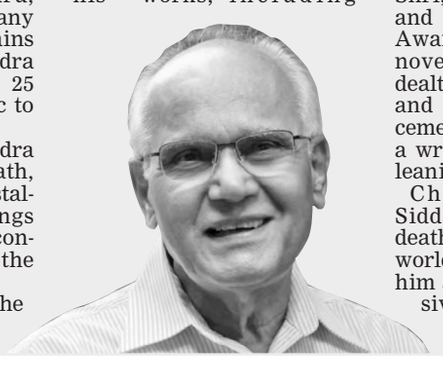
20 AUG, 1931 - 24 SEPT, 2025

Renowned Kannada novelist and philosopher SL Bhyrappa passed away due to cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Wednesday. He was 94 and is survived by his wife and two sons.

The Karnataka government has announced full State honours for his cremation, likely to be held on 26 September in Mysuru, where he lived for many years. His mortal remains will be kept at Ravindra Kalakshetra on 25 September for the public to pay their respects.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi mourned his death, calling him a "towering stalwart" whose writings stirred the nation's conscience and explored the soul of India.

Bhyrappa was one of the most widely read Kannada writers, with a literary career spanning over six decades. His 25 novels — including acclaimed workslike 'Vamshavriksha', 'Daatu', 'Parva', 'Avarana' and 'Mandara' explored human emotion, Indian philosophical thought, and cultural identity. Several of his works, including 'Naayi Neralu' and 'Matadana', were adapted into films.



Born on 20 August, 1931, in Santeshivara village, Hassan, Bhyrappa held an MA in Philosophy and a PhD in Aesthetics. He taught for over three decades and also worked with NCERT.

He received numerous honours, including the Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri, Saraswati Samman, and the Sahitya Akademi Award. His controversial novel 'Avarana', which dealt with Islamic invasions and religious conversion, cemented his reputation as a writer with pro-Hindutva leanings.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said his death has left the literary world poorer, remembering him as a writer with a massive and loyal readership. —*PTI*

INDIA TO BRING MORE CHEETAHS BY DECEMBER

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

India is negotiating with several African countries to bring a fresh group of eight to 10 cheetahs, likely from Botswana, by December. Other potential sources include Namibia, which has supplied cheetahs earlier for Project Cheetah.

The head of Project Cheetah said that cheetahs will be imported from South Africa and released into Madhya Pradesh's Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

While officials described the initiative as a "big step" for Project Cheetah, several of the animals did not survive the initial period due to the challenges of adapting to a new environment. Since the first batch arrived from Namibia in September 2022, reinforced by 12 cheetahs from South Africa in February 2023, the population now stands at 27, including 16 cubs born in India. Despite early setbacks, the cub survival rate has exceeded 61 per cent, well above the global average of 40 per cent. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Symbolic Cauvery Aarti at KRS to start on 26 Sept

MYSURU, 24 SEPT

Despite stiff opposition against holding Cauvery Aarti in Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS), Mandya district administration has made all preparations to conduct a symbolic ceremony from 26 to 30 Sept. Adichunchangirimutt Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, Suttur Mutt Seer Shivarathreeshwara Swamiji, Siddagangamuttu Siddalinga Swamiji, Visha Vokkaliga Mahasamsthan Mutt Nishchalanandanatha swamiji and others will grace the occasion. Manday district in-charge Minister N Chaluvaraya Swamy said that along with the five-day Cauvery Aarti ceremony, various other cultural programmes will also be held as part of the ensuing Dasara festival. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who also holds the water portfolio, will inaugurate the Aarti ceremony on 26 Sept. *—Salar News*

Two children drown in pond in Chamarajanagar

MYSURU, 24 SEPT

Two children drowned in a farm pond in Kuruburadoddi village in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Wednesday afternoon, ushering in a pail gloom on the residents. According to police, the deceased have been identified as Yogish, 9, and Sanjay, 7, son of Kumaraswamy of RS Doddi village. The incident took place when the children who came to their grandmother's house in Kuruabaraododdi from RS Doddi to spend Dasara holidays. The children went swimming but unfortunately drowned in the Krishi Honda (farm pond), unable swim. *—Salar News*

City police nab four for gunpoint robbery

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

City police have arrested four individuals for allegedly extorting cash and mobile phones from a man at gunpoint. The incident occurred on the night of 14 August, when the victim was waiting at Jalahalli bus stand to travel to Vijayanagar. Three unknown men approached him, offering a lift in their car. Near Dabaspet in Nelamangala, they reportedly threatened him with a pistol, seizing Rs 5,000 in cash and two mobile phones valued at Rs 75,000. Following his complaint, a robbery case was registered at Peenya police station. Investigations led to the arrest of three suspects from a room in Doddanakkundi, Marathahalli, on 25 August, with the car and three mobile phones seized. Interrogation revealed the pistol had been supplied by an associate previously in jail. *—PTI*

2 arrested for multiple burglaries in City

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

City police have arrested two men in connection with multiple house burglaries, recovering 82.5 grams of gold ornaments worth Rs 8.25 lakh. The case came to light after a resident of Patalamma Layout, Kadugodi reported 27grms of gold stolen from his home on 24 August. A suspect arrested in Sorahunase village on 16 September confessed and revealed he had committed several burglaries in the area with an accomplice, who was later arrested near Varthur. The men admitted handing over stolen gold to a friend, from whom police recovered the ornaments on 17 September. With these arrests, nine burglary cases have been solved. In a separate Kodigehalli case, 58grms of gold worth Rs 5.80 lakh was also recovered. *—PTI*

BJP protests across State over 'deathtraps' on roads

MLAs, MPs demonstrate against Cong by filling potholes

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

Opposition BJP protested in various parts of Karnataka, including in the City, targeting the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government over the pothole menace and the poor condition of the roads across the State. In City, BJP leaders demonstrated by filling potholes. In other parts of the State, they held a 'rasta roko' (road blockade), party sources said.

The protests were held in almost all of the assembly segments, they said.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka led the protest in City by filling potholes in Banashankari, with other MLAs and party leaders.

"By filling potholes we are sending a message to the government that it has lost capability. The situation is such that the people have to repair their roads as the government seems to have become bankrupt because of guarantee schemes. Industries, IT/BT companies are planning to move out of Bengaluru because of the condition of the roads here," he said.

He said that roads have become death traps, noting daily reports of casualties and injuries due to bad roads, be it in villages or City.

Hitting out at Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar statement that there are potholes on the road leading to the Prime Minister's residence in Delhi, Ashoka said, "Please look at what you have done and what you can do. People have chosen you. You are in power to tell us what you have done, not about Modi...it is not the BJP, people across the State and media are every day complaining. Despite about 2.5 years in power, you are still trying to point fingers at the BJP government, instead of taking the responsibility."

Accusing the government of doing a "temporary patchwork" in the name of repairing roads, instead of laying proper roads, he urged the government to release Rs 10,000 crore for road work in the City, if it has funds.

Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan and others participated in a similar pothole filling demonstration on BVK Iyengar Road here.

The protest in Yelahanka was led by MLA SR Vishwanath. Former legislators and leaders filled potholes in the party's north Bengaluru region.

Similarly, BJP MLA K Gopalaiah and party workers protested in front of Kanteerava Studios.

Opposition leader R Ashoka and others fill a pothole at Padmanabha Nagar, in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

> The BJP will never be happy. All these potholes have come under the BJP regime. They are responsible for the bad administration of the roads in Karnataka
>
> —DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

> Mr Shivakumar, please take a flight to America and find if there is a pothole in front of US President Donald Trump's residence
>
> —R Ashoka, Opposition Leader

BJP leader NL Narendra Babu added that government officials are not filling up the potholes, despite directions from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. "Recently the CM said potholes should be filled up within one month. What were they doing all these days? Even the Deputy CM has warned the officers, but what is happening?"

Protests were also held in Mandya, Chitradurga, Shivamogga, Gadag, Koppal districts, among other places, by blocking the roads and filling potholes. *—Agencies*

State CM Siddaramaiah next to his Telangana counterpart Revanth Reddy at a Congress Party's Working Committee in Patna, Wednesday *PHOTO: X*

Democracy at stake & only Cong can save it: CM in Patna

PATNA, 24 SEPT

- CM said that Modi, Shah, and the BJP-RSS were throttling the very spirit of the Constitution and said the PM had forsaken to Trump, who claimed to have brought peace to Kashmir

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah lashed out the BJP, saying that they have put Indian democracy at stake. Speaking at the Congress Party's Working Committee meeting on Wednesday, he said that people have realised that only the Congress can safeguard democracy.

"India today is living in the shadow of self-deception," he said, according to a statement. "Institutions are being seized, freedoms are being curtailed, and the mandate of the people is being stolen."

"The very spirit of the Constitution - liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice is being throttled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, the BJP, and their ideological masters in the RSS," he added.

"The recent SIR tragedy witnessed in Bihar proves the depths to which the BJP will stoop for power," he added, noting the alleged "vote chori" in Mahadevpur and Aland constituencies in State.

"While democracy is faltering domestically, the Modi government has failed in foreign policy. India's foreign policy, once respected globally, has now degenerated into silence and subservience. When US President Donald Trump shamelessly claimed that he had brought peace to Kashmir, Modi did not say a word. This is not diplomacy. This is a compromise with our sovereignty," he added.

"People have understood that only Congress is capable of protecting our rights, safeguarding democracy, and upholding justice," he said. "We are fighting to save India. The BJP - RSS nexus wants to destroy the soul of this country, but we will not allow it." *—Salar News*

Kalaburagi rly bridge flooded, trains hit

KALABURAGI, 24 SEPT

Heavy rains submerge a bridge between Pakini-Mundewadi railway stations in Solapur district of Maharashtra on the Karnataka border, disrupting train movement from Kalaburagi to Pune and Mumbai.

The flooding disrupted the service of two trains; The Chennai-Mumbai bound train (12164) and the Bengaluru-Mumbai bound Udyan Express train (11302).

The Udyan Express train was supposed to leave Kalaburagi railway station at 8am, while the Chennai-Mumbai bound train was supposed to leave at 6.15am. However, they were set to be operated via Bidar, Latur and Kurdwadi after 3pm, Kalaburagi Railway Station Manager PJ Jijimon said.

The Karnataka Express train (1227) going from Bengaluru to Delhi, which had left Kalaburagi railway station in the morning, reportedly halted between Kalaburagi and Solapur railway stations.

Additionally, the Kolhapur Express going from Kalaburagi to Kolhapur and the demo train going from Kalaburagi to Bidar have been cancelled, the station master informed.

Inter-State passengers protested the sudden disruptions in the station. *—Salar News*

DRIPPY CITY

Two women run for cover at Minsk Square in Bengaluru after a sudden shower caught people unaware *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

UNDER THE HAMMER

HC rejects Revanna's plea to transfer 2 rape cases

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday dismissed two petitions by former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna to transfer the trial of the two pending rape cases against him from the Civil Judge to some other sessions court.

Revanna argued that the judge which is set to hear the case is biased against him because the Justice had earlier convicted him in another rape case.

"If that can be a ground for transfer of a criminal case, there would be petitions filed for transfer in almost all criminal cases where the accused feels that he may get convicted," Justice MI Arun said, dismissing Revanna's plea.

The two rape cases in question are part of the four that were filed against the former MP last after over 2,900 videos of him purportedly sexually assaulting several women circulated. *—Salar News*

'A disguised census:' Centre argues in HC over caste survey

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday heard detailed arguments over a batch of petitions challenging the validity of the ongoing Social and Educational Survey, popularly known as "caste census".

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Joshi did not pass any interim relief but posted the matter for further hearing to Thursday.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the State, argued that the petitions were not targeting any constitutional provisions or specific sections of the Karnataka State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1995, but were in effect seeking to halt the government's exercise of power.

- Centre described State's effort as "a census disguised as a survey" and said that a valid survey must be issue-specific, unlike the present enumeration which treads into the Union's domain.

Singhvi also referred to the Supreme Court's Puttaswamy judgment to assert that governments are empowered to gather data for welfare schemes.

The bench clarified that the petitioners were not disputing the government's authority to conduct surveys but questioned the execution.

Appearing for the Union government, Additional Solicitor General Arvind Kamath contended that the constitutional framework recognises only a central census as an authoritative source of demographic data.

Kamath described Karnataka's effort as "a census disguised as a survey" and argued that a valid survey must be issue-specific, unlike the present enumeration which, he claimed treads into the Centre's domain.

Petitioners, including the Vokkaligara Sangha, Akhila Karnataka Brahmana Mahasabha, and Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha, argued that while the State can design welfare measures for backward classes, it lacks authority to carry out a caste-based survey. *—PTI*

HC stays action against BJP's Renukacharya

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

The Karnataka High Court directed that no coercive action should be taken against BJP leader MP Renukacharya, who had been booked for making an allegedly inflammatory speech during Ganesha Chaturti. Orally, the court remarked that festivals are being used politically.

The former MLA had been booked for asking youth in Davangere to defy the district administrations orders against DJ music during idol immersion. An FIR was lodged against him in this regard.

Renukacharya then moved the High Court against the FIR. The court on Wednesday, however, granted him an interim stay against coercive action.

"The petitioner shall co-operate with the investigation," the court ordered.

Orally, the court rapped the State government.

"One thing...festivals are being used for political reasons by the State government also, that is being noticed," the court remarked. *—Salar News*

'DECENTRALISING IT'

Govt proposes tech park in M'luru; Priyank says awaiting Cabinet nod

MANGALURU, 24 SEPT

The government is considering a proposal to establish a technology park here, State Minister for IT/BT and Rural Development Priyank Kharge said in Mangaluru on Wednesday. He said the project is aimed at boosting the IT sector in coastal Karnataka and is expected to receive Cabinet approval shortly.

Kharge noted that Mangaluru, with its skilled workforce, educational institutions, and connectivity, has the potential to emerge as an IT hub outside City.

He stated that the government is focusing on balanced regional growth by developing Tier 2 cities into technology centres.

"Mangaluru has the infrastructure and talent base to attract investments in IT and related industries. The proposed tech park will support startups, create jobs, and strengthen the local economy," Kharge said.

The minister added that the project would complement existing government initiatives promoting entrepreneurship and digital innovation in Karnataka. He also emphasised that the proposed tech park aligns with the State's larger vision of decentralising IT growth.

- Priyank Kharge said the government has been engaging with industry stakeholders and is confident that once approved, the project will draw significant private investment. It is also expected to reduce migration from the coast

Officials said the proposed park would provide infrastructure for IT/ITES companies, incubation centres, and collaborative spaces. It is also expected to encourage local entrepreneurs and prevent migration of youth. *—PTI*

PE teacher booked for sexual exploitation

BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

A physical education teacher, Abay Mathew, has been booked on charges of sexual exploitation, cheating on the pretext of marriage, and criminal intimidation.

The complainant, a divorcee with a daughter, met Mathew three to four years ago at her daughter's school in Gottigere, where he worked as a cricket coach. She alleged that he promised to marry her and arranged a rented house where they lived together, engaging in sexual relations.

On 20 September, when she requested marriage, Mathew allegedly abused her, threatened harm, and left the house, taking her mobile and his belongings. *—PTI*

Special train services launched for Dasara rush

MYSURU, 24 SEPT

To handle the rush of passengers during the Dasara Festival 2025, South Western Railway will operate 51 Special Train Services. These include 11 Unreserved Specials, 27 Express Specials, 3 Temporary Stoppages, 2 Temporary Extensions, and 8 Extensions of Periodicity, connecting Mysuru Division with Bengaluru, Belagavi, Yeshvantpur, Shivamogga Town, Vijayapura, Arsikere, Karaikkudi, Madgaon, Ramanathapuram, Chamarajanagar, Talguppa, and Tirunelveli.

Last year, Mysuru Division recorded 6.91 lakh passengers during Dasara, averaging 69,000 per day and peaking at 1.10 lakh on Dasara Day. With additional trains, officials expect higher numbers this year.

For crowd management, 70 staff members, over 150 RPF and GRP personnel, and 50 CCTV cameras have been deployed. Three 'May I Help You' kiosks are set up, with extra staff from SBC and UBL divisions assisting counters and checks. Scouts and Guides will help regulate crowds.

Four TTEs will manage each Foot Over Bridge and subways, while staff with walkie-talkies coordinate with security. Ticketing arrangements include relocated ATVMs, four pre-printed counters, and two new counters at the Divisional Office. On 2 October, buggy services and parcel loading after 2pm will be suspended. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

Polls for 4 J&K RS seats to take place on 24 Oct

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Election Commission (EC) has announced that biennial elections for four vacant Rajya Sabha seats from Jammu and Kashmir will be held on 24 October, alongside a by poll to fill the Punjab seat vacated by AAP's Sanjeev Arora. Arora resigned after his election to the Punjab assembly. The four Jammu and Kashmir seats have been vacant since 2021. With the UT assembly now in place, MLAs will elect the members, with counting occurring in the evening. The EC has introduced an e-verification system for voter roll deletions, sending one-time passwords to registered mobile phones to prevent misuse, following thousands of incorrect applications in Karnataka's Aland constituency. *—PTI*

3 Maoists killed in gunfight in Jharkhand

RANCHI, 24 SEPT

Three members of a banned Maoist splinter group were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Gumla district on 24 September. The encounter, involving the Jharkhand Jaguar and Gumla Police, occurred around 8am in a forest near Kechki village. The operation targeted members of the outlawed Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad (JJMP). Following the clash, officials recovered three weapons from the site. The deceased were identified as Lalu Lohra and Sujit Oraon, both from Lohardaga district, and Chotu Oraon from Latehar. A search operation is underway to track other rebels. The operation was part of continued efforts to curb Maoist activity in the region and ensure safety for local communities. *—PTI*

YSRCP rolls out digital book to record injustices

AMARAVATI, 24 SEPT

YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched a "digital book" and an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) facility to document alleged injustices and political persecution against party members. The initiative aims to record every reported incident, which Reddy says will form the basis of formal investigations once the party returns to power. The digital platform allows anyone who has faced "injustice or political victimisation" to upload details of their case, creating a permanent record. The IVRS system provides an alternative for individuals to register grievances over the phone. Reddy emphasised that these records are not symbolic. He assured that a Special Investigation Team will be constituted to probe every documented case. He also stated that wrongdoers will be held accountable. *—PTI*

NIA books Pannun for plot to stop PM's flag hoisting

UNITED NATIONS, 24 SEPT

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) has registered a sedition case against US-based Khalistani leader Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, who reportedly offered Rs 11 crore to any Sikh soldier willing to stop Prime Minister Narendra Modi from hoisting the national flag on this year's Independence Day. Pannun, legal advisor to the banned group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), is accused of inciting mutiny against the government. The FIR, filed on 19 August, refers to a "Meet the Press" event at the Lahore Press Club in Pakistan, where Pannun addressed journalists via video link and promoted the idea of an independent Khalistan. He was designated as "terrorist" by the government in 2020. *—ANI*

US tariffs to graft in Bihar; Cong flays Modi at CWC

Congress claims PM's 'friends' are causing troubles for India

PATNA, 24 SEPT

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) launched a multi-pronged attack on the Narendra Modi-led NDA government on Wednesday, criticising its foreign policy failures over US tariffs, rising corruption in Bihar, and silence on the Gaza genocide.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, in his opening remarks, said Prime Minister Modi's much-publicised friendships with global leaders are now "putting India in numerous troubles." He cited the recent US tariffs and H1B visa restrictions imposed under President Donald Trump, calling them a consequence of Modi's failed diplomacy.

Echoing this, Rahul Gandhi alleged a "collapse" of India's foreign policy, asserting that diplomacy cannot rely on "personal friendships."

The CWC also took aim at the NDA's governance in Bihar. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh termed it a "note chor" government, accusing the Nitish Kumar-led regime of systemic corruption and crime. The party said crime and corruption were the "two real engines" of the so-called "double engine" government.

Citing CAG findings of over 49,000 pending utilisation certificates amounting to Rs 70,877 crore, the Congress alleged "organised loot" and daylight dacoity. It also highlighted shocking details of cash hoards hidden in water tanks and pipes.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader and LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during the party's flag hoisting ceremony before the extended Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, in Patna *PHOTO: PTI*

Give vote theft proof to CID: EC told

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday claimed that the EC has put a lock on "vote theft" only after he raised the matter, and asked Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar when he would provide evidence to the Karnataka CID on the "deletion" of votes in Aland. Gandhi referred to a new 'e-sign' feature rolled out by EC that requires Aadhar-based verification for addition or deletion of votes. EC officials said the verification system is not a reaction to Aland assembly constituency row.

The CWC accused the NDA of being not just "vote chor" but also "zameen chor", citing the alleged illegal leasing of land in Bhagalpur to the Adani Group and the controversial Bihar Land Survey 2025.

The party also condemned the government's suppression of student and teacher protests, as well as the police's failure to address the deteriorating law and order.

On Gaza, the CWC expressed "profound distress" over the ongoing "genocide" and criticised the Modi government's silence, saying India has been "reduced to a silent spectator" and its foreign policy has acquired a "moral taint."

Meanwhile, Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi said AIMIM will join the INDIA bloc in Bihar only if it is given six Assembly seats. *—PTI*

Manipur police display arms and ammunition seized from Khundongbam Ojit Singh in Imphal, Manipur *PHOTO: PTI*

Manipur ambush: Prime accused held

IMPHAL, 24 SEPT

The prime accused in the 19 September ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy in Manipur, which claimed the lives of two personnel, has been arrested.

A large number of arms and ammunition were also recovered based on the inputs provided by the accused.

On receipt of specific information about the presence of armed militants in the Kameng area, a team of police and other security forces launched a special operation on 24 September 24.

The accused Khundongbam Ojit Singh, 47, admitted of being a bailed-out member of the banned People's Liberation Army. He was directly involved in the ambush that also injured five others.

Raids are underway to arrest the other culprits involved.

Two persons were detained and a van, suspected to have been used in the attack, was recovered from Mutum Yangbi in Imphal West district, around 10 km from the ambush site.

Earlier, police and forensic personnel had recovered several fired cartridges from the site.

The injured jawans hail from Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya and Uttarakhand, besides Manipur.

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had condemned the attack on security forces.

Manipur is under President's Rule since February, after the resignation of Chief Minister N Birendra Singh.

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA is enforced in entire Manipur except in 13 police station areas of the five valley districts. Nambol, where the ambush occurred, falls in Bishnupur district and had no AFSPA coverage, officials had said.

Ethnic clashes between Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur have left 260 people dead and thousands homeless since May 2023. *—PTI*

Dhinakaran: No tie-up if Edappadi is CM face

CHENNAI, 24 SEPT

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) General Secretary TTV Dhinakaran on Wednesday said there is no possibility of an alliance with AIADMK as long as Edappadi Palanisami remains the party's CM candidate.

Dhinakaran also added that Annamalai's recent visit to him was only a courtesy call.

Dhinakaran *PHOTO: PTI*

Dhinakaran said Annamalai asked him to reconsider leaving NDA, but he refused, citing past betrayals by Edappadi Palanisami and the party.

He added that attempts were made to compromise him in Delhi, which prompted AMMK's exit.

Dhinakaran said that his party acted against the betrayal by Edappadi Palanisami and cannot form an alliance with those who tried to undermine them.

He added that AMMK opposed Edappadi's candidacy in 2007.

"We never thought to tell the government, but we just spoke and acted against the betrayal by Palanisami. We, who saved the government, were not even given permission to conduct May Day meetings.

How can we have an alliance with those who wanted to destroy us?" he said.

Dhanikaran also claimed that 90 per cent of AIADMK want to join again. Amit Saha never said that Palanisami is the NDA's CM candidate. What AIADMK was now was not the same as before; it is just an Edapadi Palanisami party *—ANI*

Global South must not depend on single markets, says EAM

NEW YORK, 24 SEPT

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday urged Global South countries to reduce dependence on any single supplier or market by building resilient supply chains, promoting fair economic practices, and enhancing South-South trade and technology collaboration.

Speaking at a high-level meeting of Like-Minded Global South Countries on the sidelines of the 80th UN General Assembly, Jaishankar highlighted the mounting challenges facing developing nations, from pandemic shocks and conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza to climate events, volatile trade and slowing progress of Sustainable Development Goals. He noted that while multilateralism offers solutions, the international system is increasingly under strain, with organisations often rendered ineffective or under-resourced, and the very concept of multilateralism facing challenges.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands David van Weel during a meeting, in New York *PHOTO: PTI*

Jaishankar stressed that the Global South must present a united front to demand a level playing field, safeguard economic and food security. He emphasised protecting global commons and leveraging technology for development.

He proposed five steps for the Global South to strengthen collective influence, including utilising existing forums, advocating comprehensive UN reforms, and highlighting their strengths in vaccines, digital capabilities, education, agriculture, and SMEs. *—PTI*

PM to lay R'than nuclear plant foundation

JAIPUR, 24 SEPT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Banswara, Rajasthan, on Thursday to inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of a wide range of development projects worth over Rs 1.22 lakh crore, including Rs 1,08,468 crore allocated for the state.

The projects cover sectors such as energy, water, infrastructure, health, and urban development. The highlight of the visit is the proposed 2,800 MW Mahi-Banswara nuclear plant, expected to play a key role in achieving energy self-sufficiency for Rajasthan.

Other initiatives include a 590 MW renewable energy project in Bikaner costing Rs 8,500 crore, high-capacity power transmission lines across Jaisalmer, Barmer, Sirohi, Nagaur, and Bikaner worth Rs 13,183 crore, and 15 new drinking water supply schemes in 11 districts, including Banswara, Udaipur, and Ajmer, with a cost of Rs 5,884 crore. Infrastructure projects such as flyovers, a bridge over the Banas River, 119 roads under Atal Pragati Path scheme, and three grid substations are also planned. *—PTI*

Pahalgam terrorists's aide held

SRINAGAR, 2 SEPT

Police on Wednesday arrested a person from South Kashmir who had allegedly provided logistical support to terrorists responsible for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, officials said here.

Based on an intelligence lead, Srinagar police launched an operation and arrested an over ground worker from South Kashmir's Kulgam district. He was identified as Mohd Yousuf Katari, 26.

Katari was produced before a court here, which remanded him to 14 days in police custody. The officials said that he had a role in providing logistical support to the terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attack who were later killed during Operation Mahadev. In the July 29 encounter, the Army's elite para commandos had gunned down the three terrorists on the outskirts of Srinagar. These terrorists belonged to the Pakistan backed The Resistance Front.

They included Sulieman alias Asif, the mastermind and Jibran and Hamza Afghani. Jibran was involved in the Sonamarg Tunnel attack in October 2024.

Kataria, who worked in a contractual job and also taught children, came in contact with the terrorists a few months ago and began aiding their movements.

He the Lashkar group in navigating through Kulgam's forest areas months before the Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people. Investigators are also trying to uncover the past movements, hideouts and the help the Pahalgam attackers received from the time they entered the state. *—PTI*

RUSSIA DYPM AT TAJ

Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Parushev during his visit to the Taj Mahal in Agra in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday. His visit to India is aimed at strengthening bilateral strategy to export shrimps to Russia and strengthen trade ties between the two countries *PHOTO: PTI*

ON 26 SEPTEMBER

MiG-21 fighter jets to retire from IAF

CHANDIGARH, 24 SEPT

The legendary Russian-origin MiG-21 fighter jets, which have been the backbone of Indian Air Force's combat fleet for over six decades, are finally set to retire from the IAF at a decommissioning event in Chandigarh, where the iconic aircraft was first inducted over six decades ago.

The official culmination of MiG-21 operations is set for 26 September with a ceremonial flypast and decommissioning event.

The last of the MiG-21 jets, belonging to number 23 Squadron nicknamed "Panthers", will be given a farewell.

Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, will fly the last sortie of the Squadron with the call sign 'Badal 3'.

The last of the MiG-21 jets, belonging to number 23 Squadron nicknamed "Panthers", will be given a farewell *PHOTO: PTI*

Dilbagh Singh, who became the IAF chief in 1981, had led the first MiG-21 Squadron here in 1963.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh and Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, will be present on the occasion.

Upon landing, the six MiG-21 jets will be given a water cannon salute. The Jaguar and the Tejas aircrafts will also be part of the ceremony.

The IAF procured over 870 MiG-21s to boost its overall combat prowess.

The supersonic jets were the dominant platforms during 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan. The aircraft also played a key role in the 1999 Kargil conflict as well as 2019 Balakot airstrikes.

However, they were also involved in multiple crashes.

The ceremony will start with a spectacular display by IAF's elite skydiving team 'Akash Ganga', who will skydive from a height of 8,000 feet. *—PTI*

Centre OKs Rs 69,725 cr for maritime ecosystem

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Rs 69,725 crore package to revive India's shipbuilding and wider maritime ecosystem, calling the sector strategically important for trade and security.

The plan rests on four pillars: boost domestic shipbuilding capacity, provide long-term financing, develop greenfield and brownfield shipyards, and upgrade skills, technology and policy frameworks.

Key measures include extending the Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme until 31 March, 2036, with a corpus of Rs 24,736 crore and a Rs 4,001 crore shipbreaking credit; a National Shipbuilding Mission will oversee implementation.

A new maritime development fund of Rs 25,000 crore was approved for long-term finance. It will include a Rs 20,000 crore Maritime Investment Fund and a Rs 5,000 crore Interest Incentivisation Fund to lower borrowing costs.

The Centre also allocated Rs 6,014.31 crore for roads and railways in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections.

The cabinet gave its nod to the doubling of the 104-km Bakhtiyarpur-Rajgir-Tilaiya single railway line section in poll-bound Bihar with a total cost of about Rs 2,192 crore. The project will cover four districts and increase the existing network of the Indian Railways by about 104 km.

It also approved construction of the four-lane Sahebganj-Areraj-Bettiah section of 78.942km on National Highway-139W in Bihar on the hybrid-annuity mode at Rs 3,822.31 crore. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FB

Op Numkhor: Actor says one of his cars seized

KOCHI, 24 SEPT

Malayalam actor Amith Chakkalackal has stated that only one of the vehicles seized from his home by customs belongs to him. Speaking to reporters in Kochi, he said his second-hand Land Cruiser was his sole car, while other high-end vehicles were brought to him for renovation or repair. The actor added that he had already submitted all required documents to the customs authorities when first summoned last year. The seizure was part of statewide raids under "Operation Numkhor," which targeted an alleged car smuggling racket. A total of 36 luxury cars were confiscated across Kerala, including from other film personalities. Authorities are investigating potential money laundering and tax evasion.—*PTI*

UP singer, hubby held for song insulting Goddess

MIRZAPUR, 24 SEPT

Mirzapur folk singer Saroj Sargam and her husband, Ram Milan Bind, have been arrested for allegedly uploading a song containing derogatory references to the Hindu deity Goddess Durga. The video, posted on Sargam's YouTube channel, sparked outrage among the local Hindu community. Police launched an investigation following a complaint, which confirmed the couple's involvement, with Bind reportedly producing the video. Senior Superintendent of Police Somen Barma confirmed that both were taken into custody. Religious leaders had earlier demanded the singer's immediate arrest. Authorities are also pursuing a separate case against Sargam for alleged encroachment on forest land. The arrest drew significant attention locally.—*PTI*

WB minister summoned in school jobs scam

KOLKATA, 24 SEPT

A Kolkata special court has directed West Bengal minister Chandranath Sinha to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on 25 and 26 September for questioning in connection with the ongoing school jobs scam. The case involves alleged financial irregularities in the recruitment of staff for state-run schools. The court rejected the ED's request for his custody, noting a lack of urgency in the agency's earlier investigation. Sinha, who is currently out on bail, will face questioning following approval from the West Bengal governor, who granted the ED permission to prosecute him in the matter. Sinha's role in the recruitment irregularities will be probed.—*PTI*

Delhi BMW crash: Accused denies hitting motorbike

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Gaganpreet Kaur, accused in the Dhaula Kuan BMW case, told a Delhi court on Wednesday that her car did not hit the motorbike and she took the injured to hospital within 24 minutes. Judicial Magistrate Ankit Garg was hearing her bail arguments. Kaur, 38, is alleged to have driven the BMW that killed senior finance ministry official Navjot Singh, 52 and seriously injured his wife on Ring Road on 14 September. Her lawyer said CCTV footage shows the car first hit the footpath, flipped, and was then struck by the motorcycle. The prosecution claimed Kaur delayed medical aid by taking the injured to a hospital, which was owned by her relative. The victim's wife wished to go to another hospital. Kaur is in police custody.—*PTI*

Wangchuk urges calm as forces use teargas on youths

Says no point of protest if young lives are lost, peace is lost

LEH, 24 SEPT

As violence erupted in Leh over the statehood demand, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Wednesday, urged youth to end the unrest and return to non-violent methods.

"I request the youth of Ladakh to stop the violence forthwith as it only harms our cause," Wangchuk appealed, as teargas shells exploded in the background.

"We do not want instability in Ladakh or the country," he said pleading the people to avoid violence in any manner.

"The fast has no meaning if our youth lose their lives," he said, urging the government to show sensitivity and stop using force.

Describing it as "the saddest day for Ladakh," Wangchuk said the peaceful path pursued for five years, including hunger strikes and a Leh-to-Delhi march, had been tarnished by the day's arson and clashes

Sonam Wangchuk blamed the unrest on growing frustration over lack of jobs, democracy and implementation of Sixth Schedule PHOTO: PTI

- "We do not want instability in Ladakh or the country. The fast has no meaning if our youth lose their lives," he said, urging the government to show sensitivity.

He blamed the unrest on growing frustration among youth over unfulfilled promises, including jobs, democracy, and the implementation of the Sixth Schedule, a constitutional provision offering autonomy to tribal regions. "There is no democracy in Ladakh. The Sixth Schedule promise remains unfulfilled," he said.

The Sixth Schedule, currently applicable to four northeastern states, provides special governance, financial and judicial powers through autonomous councils.

Tensions escalated after Leh town shut down and protesters marched from NDS memorial ground, chanting slogans for statehood and Sixth Schedule protections. Youths torched police vehicles and vandalised the BJP office.

Talks between the Centre and Ladakh representatives, the Ladakh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), are scheduled for 6 October. Former MP Thupstan Chhewang has resumed leadership of the LAB and is expected to lead the delegation.Congress, opted out of the LAB after calls for a non-political delegation. —*PTI*

A police personnel regulates vehicular movement in a waterlogged area in Kolkata on Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

Kolkata returns to normalcy amid rains

KOLKATA, 24 SEPT

Kolkata struggled to return to normalcy on Wednesday as several areas, particularly Salt Lake and pockets of north and central part of the city, remained waterlogged, a day after torrential rain left 10 people dead and threw life out of gear in the metropolis.

The meteorological department forecast cloudy skies with light to moderate showers accompanied by thunder and gusty winds at some places.

Water was pumped out of low-lying areas and adjoining areas of Kolkata through the night, but residents of Bidhannagar continued to reel under flooding, with vehicles moving at a snail's pace and pedestrians forced to navigate inundated lanes.

The Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation kept street lights switched off on Tuesday evening.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who had deferred her scheduled Durga Puja pandal inaugurations on Tuesday, is expected to visit the marquees on Wednesday, as well as launch a newly constructed fire station at Kalighat.

Though floodwaters have started receding gradually, restoring normal life before the festive season remains the administration's immediate challenge.

The situation in Kolkata and adjoining districts will be closely watched on Wednesday with more rain on the radar.

10 people were killed, nine of who were electrocuted. —*PTI*

2 crocodiles stray from Kolkata zoo

KOLKATA, 24 SEPT

Two crocodiles strayed from their enclosure as heavy rain inundated the Alipore Zoological Museum on 23 September 23 before being put back in after an hour. Zoo employees, who were inspecting the enclosures and cages of other animals, spotted the reptiles. The zoo authorities pressed into service several pumps to drain out water from the enclosures of hippopotamus, tiger, giraffe and other animals, officials have said. —*PTI*

Godman used threats, promises of travel trips to exploit women

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The self-styled godman, on the run after allegedly sexually assaulting several female students of a management institute here, allegedly pressured them with threats of lower grades and lured them with promises of foreign trips, an officer said on Wednesday.

Some of these messages read: "Come to my room," "I will take you abroad on a trip, you won't have to pay anything" and "If you do not listen to me, I will make sure you fail in your exams."

In one message, he lures a woman by promising her wealth.

Till now, investigators have examined phones of more than 50 students, and many of them were found to have deleted the incriminating chats, the officer said.

The vehicle with the UN number plates PHOTO: X

The wardens named in the FIR allegedly forced these students to delete the chats.

Some CCTV footage is also suspected to have been deleted. Police also found in the institute's basement a Volvo car with a forged diplomatic number plate, 39 UN 1, used by Saraswati.

The UN no. fiasco

The accused's use of a Volvo car with a fake UN number plate has added to the controversy, suggesting possible misuse of diplomatic symbols. Hailing from Odisha, Saraswati had been living in an ashram in Delhi for the last 12 years, where he served as both a caretaker and an operator.

Police also suspect that Saraswati maintained strong connections across states, which likely helped him remain out of reach despite repeated raids. —*PTI*

Sonu Sood questioned in betting app case

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Actor Sonu Sood appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in New Delhi for questioning in a money laundering probe linked to the online betting platform 1xBet.

He is being questioned under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), as part of a broader investigation into online betting apps that allegedly duped numerous users and evaded significant taxes.

The ED has already questioned several high-profile figures, including former cricketers Suresh Raina, Shikhar Dhawan, and Yuvraj Singh, as well as actors and social media influencers who promoted the app.

Authorities are examining how these celebrities were paid The agency may also attach assets tied to alleged proceeds of crime. —*PTI*

Uttarakhand SSSC paper leak main accused held

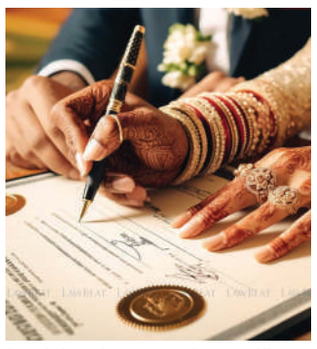
DEHRADUN, 24 SEPT

Police on Tuesday arrested Khalid Malik, the prime accused in the alleged leak of three pages of the Uttarakhand Subordinate Services Selection Commission (UKSSSC) exam paper. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami warned that no one involved in exam malpractices would be spared.

Haridwar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Pramod Singh Dobal said Khalid, who appeared for the exam, was caught in Laksar after being absconding for three days.

Investigating officer and Rishikesh SP Jaya Baluni alleged Khalid carried a device into the exam hall at Adarsh Bal Sadan Inter College, photographed three pages of the paper, and sent them to his sister Sabia. She then forwarded the images to Suman, an assistant professor in Tehri, who provided answers.Sabia has already been arrested, while another sister, Hina, is under suspicion. —*PTI*

If conversion is illegal, couple can't be called married: Allahabad HC



The additional chief standing counsel claimed that the conversion certificate of the wife was forged PHOTO: PTI

PRAYAGRAJ, 24 SEPT

Allahabad High Court has held that if conversion is illegal, a marriage based on it will be automatically invalid and the man and woman cannot be recognised as a married couple in the eyes of law.

The court passed this order on a writ filed by Mohammad Bin Qasim alias Akbar seeking direction to the respondents not to interfere in their peaceful marital life.

Qasim belonged to Muslim community while Jainab Parveen alias Chandrakanta was Hindu. On 22 February, 2025, Chandrakanta accepted Islam and Khanqahe Alia Arifia issued a certificate for this.

On 26 May, their marriage was solemnised as per rituals under the Muslim law and a marriage certificate was issued by the Quazi concerned, the counsel for the petitioners submitted.

However, the additional chief standing counsel termed the conversion certificate to be a forged document, since the institution had not issued the certificate on 22 February.

The court also directed that till the receiving of the certificate Parveen will be kept in a women's protection home in Prayagraj. —*PTI*

HC bins plea to remove Afzal Guru, Maqbool Bhatt graves

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to hear a plea seeking the removal of the graves of terrorists Mohammad Afzal Guru and Mohammad Maqbool Bhatt from Tihar Jail.

Both were sentenced to death and executed at the prison, Bhatt in 1984 and Guru in 2013. Observing the court's apparent reluctance, the petitioners' counsel requested permission to withdraw the petition and re file it with additional data.

The court allowed the withdrawal, treating the PIL as "dismissed as withdrawn".

The court noted that public interest litigation must demonstrate a violation of constitutional, fundamental, or statutory rights, and that no law prohibits cremation or burial within jail premises. The plea, claimed the graves glorified terrorism and the central jail had become a site of "radical pilgrimage." —*PTI*

SC bats for portal to trace missing kids

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Supreme Court on Wednesday instructed the Centre to establish a dedicated online portal, under the aegis of the Home Ministry, to trace missing children and coordinate investigations across the country. A Bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan highlighted the poor coordination among state and Union Territory police forces tasked with such cases.

The Court suggested that each state should appoint a dedicated officer to oversee missing-child complaints and ensure timely sharing of information. It emphasised the need for a "coordinated effort" and for the creation of a centralised system to monitor and act on such cases effectively.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, was asked to obtain instructions on the proposal. The Court also recalled its previous directive asking the Centre to issue reminders to states and Union Territories to submit updated data on missing minors. The petition, filed by NGO Guria Swayam Sevi Sansthan, cited how minors from Uttar Pradesh were trafficked to other state. —*PTI*

SC to hear on age of consent of teens

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Supreme Court will begin continuous hearings on 12 November over challenges to India's statutory age of consent. The court weighed calls from amicus curiae Indira Jaising to reduce the age from 18 to 16, citing criminalisation of adolescent relationships. The Centre, through ASG Aishwarya Bhati, defends 18 as vital to child protection. —*PTI*

Zubeen Garg death: Assam bans NE Festival organiser

GUWAHATI, 24 SEPT

- The state barred Mahanta and related organisations from receiving any financial grant, advertisement or sponsorship from the government of Assam.

The Assam government on Wednesday banned Syamkanu Mahanta, chief organiser of the North East (NE) Festival, from holding any functions or events in the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on X.

The state also barred Mahanta and related organisations from receiving any financial grant, advertisement or sponsorship from the Assam government, and will ask the Centre not to extend financial assistance to him. The NE Festival receives backing from several central ministries and support from most northeastern state governments.

The decision comes after singer Zubeen Garg passed away in Singapore on 19 September, where he had travelled to participate in the fourth edition of the festival organised by Mahanta's company. A non-invasive autopsy conducted on the island confirmed 'drowning' as the cause of death. Notably, he was scheduled to perform at the ongoing North East Festival the following day.

Garg's sudden demise prompted calls for an independent inquiry soon. —*PTI*

7,095 ATTACKS WEEKLY

'Edu sector is prime cyberattack target'

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

India's education and research sector continues to remain one of the most targeted industries for cyberattacks, according to the latest Threat Intelligence Report from Nasdaq-listed Check Point Software Technologies Ltd.

The sector faced an average of 7,095 weekly attacks per organization, placing it above government institutions and consumer goods companies, and second globally only to healthcare.

Organizations in India experienced an average of 3,233 cyberattacks per week over the past six months, the report stated.

The surge in cyberattacks on the education sector is driven by a unique set of factors like expanded digital footprint,

Indian organisations face 3,233 cyberattacks weekly PHOTO: FREEPIK

resource constraints, open access platforms and high value targets.

Hybrid learning models, the widespread use of personal/shared devices, and highly connected campuses have significantly widened the attack surface.

Many institutions also rely on limited cyber security budgets, outdated infrastructure, and small IT teams, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Heavy dependence on internet-facing tools for collaboration, research, and virtual classrooms creates multiple entry points for attackers.

Intellectual property, sensitive student data, and access to government-funded research attract cybercriminals.

"Infostealers and remote access Trojans are exploiting vulnerabilities in hybrid learning models and connected ecosystems. To counter this, institutions need to embrace a prevention first posture powered by cloud native security, endpoint protection and actionable threat intelligence. —*ANI*

A RIDE TO REMEMBER

Commuters push a motorcycle through fast-moving waters of the swollen Bean River after heavy rainfall in Chilla Range, Rishikesh in Uttarakhand, on Wednesday. Many states are inundated after heavy rains ***PHOTO: PTI***

Trump's visa fee makes Indian workers rethink US

Aditi Menon recently graduated with an engineering degree from a college in India's central Madhya Pradesh state, and secured admission to a couple of midtier US universities for her master's degree.

Her plans to build a future in the United States have been thrown into disarray after President Donald Trump last week proposed a new $1,00,000 application fee for H1B visas, which allow highly skilled foreign workers to find employment in the US.

US tech companies have routinely used the visa programme to attract talent for computer programming and development jobs. Applicants from India make up over 70 per cent of approved beneficiaries under the programme. Coming up second are skilled workers from China, amounting to 11 per cent.

Every year, a limited number of 85,000 visas are offered by a lottery system, with 20,000 of those reserved for foreign graduates with advanced degrees from a US college or university.

Currently, visa applicants pay a small fee to enter a lottery, and, if their application is selected, another fee is paid to formally process the application. Companies recruiting workers generally pay the fees, which currently range from $2,000 to $5,000. The newly announced fee applies once, and only to new applications.

E-commerce giant Amazon tops the list of H1B beneficiaries, with 10,000 visas approved in the latest tranche. Microsoft and Meta each have received around 5,000, with the Mumbai-based multinational Tata Consultancy Services also in the same range.

Now, with the Trump administration's clampdown on immigration, many applicants feel like a door is closing.

"I realize it is unlikely that any employer will sponsor me unless I attend a top-ranked school or fill a rare skill gap. Life looks uncertain in the US, especially for potential job prospects after graduation," Menon told DW.

US tech companies have routinely used the visa programme to attract talent for computer programming and development jobs. Indians make up over 70 per cent of approved beneficiaries ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Tech talent looking elsewhere

Menon is considering delaying her move to the United States or exploring graduate programmes in countries such as Canada and Germany, where she feels the poststudy work chances are better.

Cecilia Hu, an employment-based immigration lawyer in New York, told DW that her clients from China who are seeking H1B visas are "very panicked" and have started exploring alternative immigration options.

Hu said Trump's swift changes to the H1B visa policy could intensify the competition between the United States and China for high-tech talent. While Trump likely does not intend to drive out top talent, his latest executive order has triggered this effect.

"We've also observed that many Chinese students tend not to consider staying in the US after graduation," Hu said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Monday that it would not comment on US visa policies, but noted that China "welcomes outstanding talents" from across the world.

China recently opened the door for young foreign professionals in science and technology fields with a newly created "K visa," which will take effect in October.

"There is indeed concern that the US could be driving out a large number of talented individuals, while China may very well absorb a portion of this top talent," Hu said.

Meera Shankar, a former ambassador of India to the United States, told DW that the imposition of a $100,000 fee for H1B visas effectively guts the programme.

US tech jobs getting tougher for foreigners

Siddharth Rao, who recently completed his master's degree in information systems from the University of Texas, knows that it is an uphill task to secure employer sponsorship and register for the next H1B visa lottery scheduled in March 2026.

"Many small and midsized IT companies will certainly hesitate to sponsor candidates like me due to the prohibitive costs of the visa," Rao told DW.

"It is no longer enough to be highly skilled. One needs to be deemed 'extraordinary' to get a shot," added Rao.

Experts say IT companies that traditionally hired large numbers of Indian H1B workers are facing sharply increased immigration costs, which could reduce profit margins.

This will likely accelerate shifts toward automation, offshoring work and recruiting US talent to avoid these fees.

Jayant Krishna, a former regional director at Tata Consultancy Services, told DW that Indian tech firms operating in the US have already started winding down dependence on H1B workers, and are recruiting more US citizens.

National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), a tech industry interest group, said that India's tech industry is spending "$1 billion on local upskilling and recruitment in the US, and the number of local hires has increased significantly."

Bridge to 'America's innovation ecosystem'

Ram Krishnan, a tech entrepreneur in Boston, told DW that, historically, the H1B pathway has been a critical bridge for Indian students who first come to the US to pursue STEM graduate programmes.

He cited the more recent example of Perplexity AI, valued at nearly $20 billion, and co-founded by Aravind Srinivas. "Aravind came to the US as a student and earned his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. Without the H1B pathway, the creation of transformative companies like Perplexity and the innovation, jobs and economic growth they bring would have been far less likely," Krishnan said.

— DW

SALAR ساڈا

It's OK to use paracetamol in pregnancy, says science

United States President Donald Trump has urged pregnant women to avoid paracetamol except in cases of extremely high fever, because of a possible link to autism.

Paracetamol – known as acetaminophen or by the brand name Tylenol in the US – is commonly used to relieve pain, such as back pain and headaches, and to reduce fever during pregnancy.

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasises that there is currently no conclusive scientific evidence confirming a possible link between autism and use of acetaminophen (also known as paracetamol) during pregnancy.

Similarly, Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration on Tuesday re-affirmed existing medical guidelines that it's safe for pregnant women to take paracetamol at any stage of pregnancy.

Paracetamol is classified as a Category A drug. This means many pregnant women and women of childbearing age have long used it without increases in birth defects or harmful effects on the foetus.

It's important to treat fevers in pregnancy. Untreated high fever in early pregnancy is linked to miscarriage, neural tube defects, cleft lip and palate, and heart defects. Infections in pregnancy have also been linked to greater risks of autism.

How has the research evolved in recent years?

In 2021 an international panel of experts looked at evidence from human and animal studies of paracetamol use in pregnancy. Their consensus statement warned that paracetamol use during pregnancy may alter foetal development, with negative effects on child health.

Last month a group of researchers from Harvard University examined the association between paracetamol and neuro-developmental disorders including autism and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in existing research.

They identified 46 studies and found 27 studies reported links between taking paracetamol in pregnancy and neuro-developmental disorders in the offspring, nine showed no significant link, and four indicated it was associated with a lower risk.

The most notable study in their review, due to its sophisticated statistical analysis, covered almost 2.5 million children born in Sweden between 1995 and 2019, and was published in 2024.

The authors found there was a marginally increased risk of autism and ADHD associated with paracetamol use during pregnancy. However, when the researchers analysed matched-full sibling pairs, to account for genetic and environmental influences the siblings shared, the researchers found no evidence of an increased risk of autism, ADHD, or intellectual disability associated with paracetamol use.

Siblings of autistic children have a 20 per cent chance of also being autistic. Environmental factors within a home can also affect the risk of autism. To account for these influences, the researchers compared the outcomes of siblings where one child was exposed to paracetamol in utero and the other wasn't, or when the siblings had different levels of exposure.

The authors of the 2024 study concluded that associations found in other studies may be attributable to "confounding" factors: influences that can distort research findings.

Working out what causes or increases the risk of autism

A key piece to consider when assessing the risk of paracetamol and any link to neurodevelopmental disorders is how best to account for many other potentially relevant factors that may be important.

We still don't know all the causes of autism, but several genetic and non-genetic factors have been implicated: the mother's medication use, illnesses, body mass index, alcohol consumption, smoking status, pregnancy complications including pre-eclampsia and foetal growth restriction, the mother and father's ages, whether the child is an older or younger sibling, the newborn's Apgar scores to determine their state of health, breastfeeding, genetics, socioeconomic status, and societal characteristics.

It's particularly hard to measure the last three characteristics, so they are often not appropriately taken into account in studies.

I'm pregnant, what does this mean for me?

There is no clear evidence that paracetamol has any harmful effects on an unborn baby.

But as with any medicine taken during pregnancy, paracetamol should be used at the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible time.

If you're pregnant and develop a fever, it's important to treat this fever, including with paracetamol.

If the recommended dose of paracetamol doesn't control your symptoms or you're in pain, contact your doctor, midwife or maternity hospital for further medical advice.

Remember, the advice for taking ibuprofen and other NSAIDS when you're pregnant is different. Ibuprofen (sold under the brand name Nurofen) should not be taken during pregnancy.

—The Conversation

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Bengali Durga pooja pandals weave faith, art and festivity

The Navaratri season is not only an occasion, but also serves as a canvas for art, culture and community bonding.

For the Bengali community in Bengaluru, the festival has always been an opportunity to showcase their boundless creativity through Durga pooja pandals, and the city too is now resplendent with such celebrations.

The Bengali Durga pooja commences on Shashti, the sixth day of Navaratri, and concludes on Dasara or Vijaya Dashami, the 10th day, when the Goddess Durga has vanquished the mythological demon king Mahishasura.

In a tradition mirroring Kolkata's grandeur, Bengaluru's pandals are also based on evocative themes.

Among the most awaited this year is Oikotan Hebbal Durgotsav-2025, which has themed its decoration based on Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

Oikotan president Soma Bose, explained that the pooja is being held on the premises adjoining Green Country Public School on Airport Road, Hebbal.

Since the inception of this event in 2013, Oikotan Hebbal Durgotsav has successfully blended artistic creativity, fun, festivities and traditional religious fervour with amazing finesse to make it one of the landmark events of India's Silicon City, she told PTI.

Artists from Kolkata gives final touches to the idols of goddess Durga before placing them at the pandals in Bengaluru ***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD***

According to Bose, Oikotan has been honoured with a slew of 'Sharad Samman' awards from various Bengaluru- based organisations across different categories - Best Theme Pandal, Best Idol, Best Decoration, 'Sera Pujo' and the Best Bengali Cultural Representation.

"This year, the pandal theme features the confluence of the power of the divine with the values and teachings enshrined in an iconic scripture - Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. This profound idea will take shape in an unprecedented display of visual splendour never before witnessed in Bengaluru," the committee president said.

Another prominent Durga pooja organisers are RT Nagar Socio Cultural Trust.

"The Trust will celebrate its 19th year Durga pooja from September 27 to October 2 at Princess Green, Gate No. 9, Palace Grounds. This year's theme, "Mukti" (Freedom), reflects liberation from fear, injustice, and spiritual bondage," said RT Nagar Socio Cultural Trust chief secretary Sanjay Bhattacharjee.

He said the pandal, designed to reminisce memories of 'Kolkata pooja', is being brought to life by skilled artisans from Kolkata, including idol makers from Krishnanagar, renowned for their intricate craftsmanship and storytelling through clay.

"The idol will be adorned with traditional jewellery and vibrant garments, while the venue will be illuminated by Chandan Nagar's famed light technicians, creating a truly immersive festive experience," Bhattacharjee said.

There will be 90 stalls offering authentic Bengali food and popular brand showcases.

Vishwarup Roy of Team Maitree Bandhaan, which assists various Bengali cultural associations during pooja, said similar attractive pooja pandals have been arranged at Jayamahal, Indira Nagar, Malleswaram, North Bengaluru Bengali Pooja in Rajaji Nagar.

"The best decorations are done in Oikotan, Jayamahal, RT Nagar Palace Ground, North Bengaluru, Borsha and the one at HSR Layout. There are three poojas happening at East Bengaluru Cultural Association, Whitefield Cultural Association, Arohan, Abhinandan and Amtran in KR Puram," Roy told PTI.

—PTI

Shoot Russian jets: Trump tells NATO

After meeting Zelenskyy, Don says Russia should've won the Ukraine war in three weeks

NEW YORK, 24 SEPT

US President Donald Trump said NATO countries should shoot down Russian aircraft if they enter their airspace during a meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

When asked, "Do you think NATO countries should shoot down Russian aircraft if they enter their airspace?", Trump replied firmly, "Yes, I do." On being questioned about his current trust in Russian President Vladimir Putin, Trump said, "I'll let you know in about a month."

"Trump is a game changer by himself," Zelenskyy remarked after the meet.

Meanwhile, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen vowed that the 27-memer bloc would completely cut purchasing Russian oil and gas by the end of the year.

Earlier, Trump had threatened "major sanctions" on Moscow if it did not stop its invasion of Ukraine. However, his sanctions were contingent on reciprocation from European allies. Addressing the UN, he said that NATO and Europe were "funding a war against itself" by purchasing Russian oil.

"They have to immediately cease all energy purchases from Russia," Trump said. "Otherwise we are all wasting a lot of time."

Speaking during a pull-aside meeting with Trump on the sidelines of the UNGA, von der Leyen said, " Trump is absolutely right. We're on it. We have already massively reduced the gas supply from Russia. Completely got out of Russian coal and massively also reduced the oil supply, but there's still some coming to the European continent."

"We want to put tariffs on oil supplies that are still coming to the European Union. After the last bits of oil and gas come from Russia to the European Union, we want to get rid of it," she added.

Addressing questions about the previously set timeline of 2027, she said "We want to be out earlier. Absolutely. Till the end of the year, we have the phasing out. We have now the sanctions on the table proposed."

After the meetings, Trump took to his Truth Social to say that he thought Ukraine could win back all territory lost to Russia, a dramatic shift from the US leader's repeated calls for Kyiv to make concessions to end the war.

"I think Ukraine, with the support of the European Union, is in a position to fight and WIN all of Ukraine back in its original form," Trump wrote. "With time, patience, and the financial support of Europe and, in particular, NATO, the original Borders from where this War started, is very much an option."

"Russia has been fighting aimlessly for three and a half years a War that should have taken a Real Military Power less than a week to win. This is not distinguishing Russia," he added.

Ending the post on a reassuring note he said, "We will continue to supply weapons to NATO for NATO to do what they want with them."

—Salar News with Agencies

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meets US President Donald Trump, during the United Nations General Assembly, Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

> There is one person who can do something about (Gaza onslaught), and that is the US President. And the reason (is).... The USA supplies arms (to Gaza).... I see an American President who is involved, who reiterated from the podium, 'I want peace. I have resolved seven conflicts', who wants the Nobel Peace Prize. The Nobel Peace Prize is only possible if you stop this conflict
>
> —Emmanuel Macron, French President

A UN SPEECH LIKE NEVER BEFORE. HERE'S WHAT TRUMP SAID:

- UN is "funding an assault on Western countries and their borders".
- Climate crisis is a con-job driven by "stupid people".
- Will "blow (drug smugglers) out of existence".
- "Europe is going to hell" and is being invaded by "illegal aliens".
- Migration is the biggest global crisis.
- Slammed NATO for "funding a war against itself" by buying Russian oil and news.
- Said India and China are the biggest funders of Russia-Ukraine war.
- Threatened to impose hefty tariffs if Russia-Ukraine war doesn't stop.
- Rejected recognition of a Palestinian state.
- Claimed to have ended 7 wars – including India and Pakistan – but Trump says "UN never called".
- Called tariffs are a defence mechanism.
- Called on countries to stop developing biological defence weapons.

UN SAYS TRUMP'S TEAM STALLED ESCALATOR BY ACCIDENT

An escalator at the UN headquarters that abruptly halted just as Trump and First Lady Melania Trump stepped onto it was stalled after a videographer accompanying them likely triggered a safety mechanism inadvertently, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. The White House, meanwhile, said that it would investigate both the escalator incident and the bad teleprompter.

> These are the two things I got from the United Nations, a bad escalator and a bad teleprompter. Thank you very much
>
> Donald Trump, US President

Colombia: File case against Don for ship strikes

Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Tuesday called for a criminal investigation against Trump and other officials involved in this month's deadly strikes on boats in the Caribbean that the White House has said were transporting drugs. Even if the boats were carrying drugs, Petro said, their passengers "were not drug traffickers; they were simply poor young people."

Erdogan refers to Kashmir issue in UNGA address

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan referred to the Kashmir issue in the UN General Assembly and said his nation was "pleased" with the "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan after a period of conflict earlier this year. "The issue of Kashmir should be resolved on the basis of resolutions of the UN for the best for our brothers and sisters in Kashmir, through dialogue, we hope," he said.

Khamenei: Iran will not negotiate with US on nukes

TEHRAN, 24 SEPT

Tehran will not directly negotiate with the United States over Iran's nuclear programme, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, terming such efforts "a sheer dead end". "The US has announced the result of the talks in advance," Khamenei said in a recorded address Tuesday. "The result is the closure of nuclear activities and enrichment. This is not a negotiation. It is a diktat, an imposition." His comments followed Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi's meeting with diplomats from Germany, France and the United Kingdom – known as the E3 – as well as European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas over the reimposition of sanctions, set to take place in a few days.

—Agencies

Karki passes Ordinance for new Nepali voters

KATHMANDU, 24 SEPT

Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel on Wednesday issued an ordinance amending the Voter Registration Act, paving the way to register new voters ahead of the 5 March, 2026 general election. The ordinance followed a meeting between Prime Minister Sushila Karki and President Paudel at Sheetal Niwas, where they discussed preparations for the upcoming elections and the current political and security situation. "The EC will formulate an action plan to collect the names of new voters at the earliest," said Suman Ghimire, Information Officer at the EC. The move allows those turning 18 by 4 March, 2026, to participate. Currently, Nepal has 1.81 crore eligible voters, with numbers expected to rise as new voters are added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Musk's dad Errol accused of sexually abusing his kids

WASHINGTON, 24 SEPT

Errol Musk, the 79-year-old father of tech billionaire Elon Musk, has been accused of sexually abusing five of his children and stepchildren since 1993, according to a report by The New York Times on Tuesday. The earliest allegation dates back to 1993, when Errol Musk's four-year-old stepdaughter reportedly told relatives he had touched her at the family home. Three separate police investigations have been opened against him. Two of the inquiries ended, while it's unclear what happened in the third.NYT said that this was probably the reason why Elon hardly ever spoke about the diamantaire. Errol Musk has categorically denied the allegations reported by The New York Times, calling them "nonsense" and "false."

—Salar News

'8 1/2' actress Cardinale dies aged 87

ROME, 24 SEPT

Acclaimed Italian actor Claudia Cardinale, who starred in some of the most celebrated European films of the 1960s and 1970s, died Tuesday. She was 87. She starred in more than 100 films and made-for-television productions, but she was best known for embodying youthful purity in Federico Fellini's '8 1/2,' in 1963. Cardinale also won praise for her role as Angelica Sedara in the award-winning screen adaptation of the 'The Leopard'. *—PTI*

Trump govt rehires hundreds of fired workers

MIAMI, 24 SEPT

Hundreds of federal employees who lost their jobs in Elon Musk's cost-cutting blitz are being asked to return to work.

The General Services Administration has given the employees until the end of the week to accept or decline reinstatement, according to an internal memo.

Those who accept must report for duty on 6 Oct. after what amounts to a seven-month paid vacation, during which time the GSA in some cases racked up high costs — passed along to taxpayers — to stay in dozens of properties whose leases it had slated for termination or were allowed to expire.

"Ultimately, the outcome was the agency was left broken and understaffed," said Chad Becker, a former GSA real estate official. "They didn't have the people they needed to carry out basic functions."

He said the sudden reversal of the downsizing reflects how Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency had gone too far, too fast.

DOGE had identified the agency, which had about 12,000 employees working to centralise the acquisition and management of thousands of federal workplaces, at the start of the Trump administration, as a chief target of its campaign to reduce fraud, waste and abuse in the federal government. *—PTI*

Israel kills 84 in Gaza; Flotilla attacked

JERUSALEM, 24 SEPT

Israel killed at least 84 people in Gaza on Wednesday, as it continued its attack on Gaza City, Al Jazeera reported. Israeli military said al-Shifa Hospital, the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip was used by Hamas several days ago, and threated to attack it.

FLOTILLA ATTACKED

Activists taking part in a flotilla seeking to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza said that some of their boats were attacked by drones overnight while sailing south of Greece.

The Global Sumud Flotilla said it was attacked during the night by "unidentified drones and communications jamming." It said that "at least 13 explosions" were heard on and around several flotilla boats, while drones or aircraft dropped "unidentified objects" on at least 10 boats.

No casualties were reported. The flotilla, which includes climate activist Greta Thunberg, had been earlier been attacked twice near Tunisia. *—Agencies*

Members of Al-Kafarna family - whose son had been a high profile starvation death - sit in a camp that Israel has designated as a safe zone in Khan Younis, after being evacuated from Gaza City **PHOTO: PTI**

Waves crash against the waterfront in Hong Kong as Super Typhoon Ragasa approaches **PHOTO: PTI**

Super Typhoon kills 17 in Taiwan; China evacuates 2m

BEIJING, 24 SEPT

Super Typhoon Ragasa has killed at least 17 people and injured 32 in Taiwan, while China's southern Guangdong province evacuated more than a million residents ahead of the storm's landfall on Wednesday.

Authorities in Taiwan said about 100 people remain trapped in different regions as Ragasa continues to batter the island with heavy rain and strong winds. In Hualien County, a barrier lake overflowed, flooding nearby areas.

Seventeen people are still missing.

The storm, the 18th typhoon of the season, is expected to hit Guangdong with winds of up to 212 kmph, making it the most powerful storm to strike China this year.

The National Meteorological Centre warned of severe impact across the Pearl River Delta.

Over 2 million people have been relocated in Guangdong, while Hainan province is also under emergency alert. Flights were cancelled in Guangzhou and Zhuhai, Shenzhen airport was shut, and bus, taxi and metro services suspended.

Authorities reinforced infrastructure and trimmed 18,000 trees to minimise storm hazards. *—PTI*

HE DENOUNCED EXTREMISM

Saudi's grand mufti dies aged 80

DUBAI, 24 SEPT

Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's grand mufti who served the kingdom's top religious figure over a quarter century that saw the ultraconservative Muslim nation socially liberalise has died. The grand mufti, who was in his 80s, died on Tuesday.

Saudi Arabia's state media reported his death, without offering a cause.

Sheikh Abdulaziz's role as grand mufti put him as one of the top Islamic clerics in the world of Sunni Muslims.

Saudi Arabia, home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, hosts the annual Hajj pilgrimage required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their lives, making the pronouncements of the grand mufti closely followed.

30 NOV, 1943- 23 SEPT, 2025

While closely aligned to Al Saud ruling family, which has allowed women to drive, opened movie theatres and further socially liberalised in recent years, Sheikh Abdulaziz denounced extremists like those in the Islamic State group and al-Qaida.

He also made pronouncements during his time as grand mufti viewed as sectarian and more following Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism, a strictly austere form of Islam that for decades saw the kingdom segregate the sexes, restrict music and follow other puritanical pursuits.

Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al-Sheikh **PHOTO: X**

Sheikh Abdulaziz, who became blind as a young man, became grand mufti in 1999. While being part of the liberalisation, he also had some divisive views.

In 2012, Sheikh Abdulaziz reportedly said it was "necessary to destroy all the churches of the region".

He also targeted the faith of Islam's Shiites after Iran's Supreme Leader harshly criticised Saudi Arabia's conduct after a crush and stampede at the 2015 Hajj killed more than 2,400 pilgrims.

"We must understand they are not Muslims," he said.

He also had said women driving "exposes (them) to evil"and that girls as young as 10 could be married. *—PTI*

Tamils call for talks after 1 year of NPP in Lanka

COLOMBO, 24 SEPT

On the first anniversary of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake taking office, Sri Lanka's main Tamil party urged him to begin talks on the 'Tamil national question.'

The Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), part of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), reminded Dissanayake that he had pledged devolution of power in his manifesto but took no steps so far. In its letter dated September 22, the party said it has formed an eight-member committee to start dialogue with the president.

The National People's Power (NPP) manifesto for the 2024 presidential election promised a new constitution ensuring equality, democracy, and devolution of power. But government spokesman Nalinda Jayathissa admitted no progress has been made.

A pledge to hold long-delayed provincial council elections within a year has also been pushed further back.

The 13th Amendment of 1987, brought through Indian intervention, created provincial councils for Tamil representation. While Tamils form a significant minority in Sri Lanka's north and east, decades of conflict led by the LTTE ended in 2009 with the killing of its leader, V Prabhakaran. *—PTI*

Govt allows export of 2nd-generation ethanol

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The government has notified an additional policy condition for the export of second-generation ethanol, effective immediately. Produced from non-food, cellulosic materials such as bagasse, wood waste, rice and wheat straw, corn stalks, grasses, and algae, this ethanol offers low carbon emissions and high greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction. Its export is now permitted for both fuel and non-fuel purposes. However, exporters must obtain valid export authorisation and feedstock certification from the relevant authority. According to the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), consignments will be subject to checks to ensure compliance with the new rules, as outlined in a trade notice issued Wednesday. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Dubai's top Indian gold importer cuts volume by 30%

JEDDAH, 24 SEPT

Bafleh Jewellery, one of the Middle East's largest importers of Indian jewellery, is shifting to lightweight designs and lower-karat gold as soaring bullion prices squeeze demand across key markets. The company's Managing Director Ramesh Vora said the Dubai-based company has imported 600-700kg of jewellery from India in the first eight months of the current financial year, compared to 1.2 tonnes for all of last year. While import values have increased, volumes have dropped 20-30 per cent as gold prices surged from USD 2,200-2,500 per ounce to USD 3,600 within three months. "People cannot afford it anymore. We're thinking gold might even reach USD 4,000," Vora told PTI at a recent Saudi Arabia Jewellery Exhibition (SAJEX). *—PTI*

FMCGs struggle with magical price points amid GST cut

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Following the implementation of the new GST structure, FMCG companies expect to restore popular "magical price points" like Rs 2, Rs 5, and Rs 10 within two months, despite current challenges in pricing. The revised GST regime, effective from 22 September, has simplified the tax structure to two slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent , replacing the previous four-tier system. To pass on tax benefits quickly, companies have temporarily reduced MRPs. For example, Parle G's Rs 5 pack now sells at Rs 4.45, and a shampoo pouch priced at Rs 2 is now Rs 1.75. Due to printing lead times and factory constraints, companies couldn't immediately adjust product weights, opting for non-standard pricing.*—PTI*

India recommends anti-dumping duty on Chinese cranes

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the commerce ministry's investigation arm, has recommended a five-year anti-dumping duty on certain cranes imported from China, aimed at protecting Indian manufacturers from unfair pricing. In its final findings, the DGTR concluded that the Chinese cranes were being dumped in India at prices below their normal value, causing injury to the domestic industry. The duty is proposed as a percentage of the CIF (cost, insurance, and freight) import value, given the nature of the product. These cranes are used for loading, unloading, and shifting materials at infrastructure sites, including roads, bridges, refineries, and cement plants. In related developments, DGTR has also initiated anti-dumping investigations into imports of copper data cables and ethambutol hydrochloride from China. *—PTI*

SEBI leadership may have to disclose assets soon

Hindenburg had alleged ex-chief Madhabi Buch, Adani nexus

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

An external panel set up by market regulator SEBI is likely to recommend mandatory public disclosure of assets by its chairman and senior officials, aiming to boost transparency and avoid conflict-of-interest concerns, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The move follows allegations made by now-defunct Hindenburg Research against former SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, accusing her of holding past investments in offshore funds linked to the Adani Group. Both Buch and Adani denied the charges.

The proposed measures, expected to be submitted to SEBI next month, would require top officials to declare their assets, liabilities, and shareholdings prior to joining the regulator. If approved by SEBI's board, the recommendation would align Indian regulations with global norms, such as the US SEC, where annual public disclosures are mandatory.

Currently, SEBI bars its officials from holding any other paid positions or accepting professional fees. Though equity disclosures are required, they remain confidential. SEBI did not respond to media queries on the matter.

Both Madhabi Puri Buch and Gautam Adani had denied the charges by now-defunct Hindenburg Research *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile, Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani hailed SEBI's dismissal of the Hindenburg allegations as a "powerful validation" of the group's governance.

In a letter to shareholders, Adani said the regulator's clean chit marked the end of a period that tested the conglomerate's resilience. "Truth has prevailed," he said, calling the January 2023 short-seller report an attack on Indian enterprise itself.

SEBI recently concluded there were "no violations" in Adani's related-party transactions, rejecting key fraud claims by Hindenburg.

Adani said Group earning rose 57 per cent in two years to Rs 89,806 crore, with asset growth of 48 per cent to Rs 6.1 lakh crore. Key milestones included India's first transshipment port at Vizhinjam, 6 GW of new renewable capacity, and the world's largest copper smelter. *—Agencies*

IT SECTOR DRAGS

Markets slip for 4th straight session on H1B concerns

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

Indian markets extended their losing streak for a fourth straight session on Wednesday, weighed down by persistent foreign fund outflows and concerns over the US H1B visa fee hike impacting IT stocks.

The BSE Sensex fell 386.47 points or 0.47 per cent to close at 81,715.63. During intraday trade, it declined as much as 494.26 points. The NSE Nifty also slipped 112.60 points or 0.45 per cent to 25,056.90.

Major laggards included Tata Motors, Bharat Electronics, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, TCS and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Power Grid, Hindustan Unilever, NTPC and HCL Tech ended in the green.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) sold shares worth Rs 3,551.19 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

PHOTO: PTI

Asian markets were mixed, with South Korea's Kospi in the red, while Japan's Nikkei, Hong Kong's Hang Seng and China's Shanghai Composite closed higher. European markets opened lower, following weak cues from Wall Street.

Brent crude rose 0.44 per cent to USD 67.93 per barrel.

The rupee ended almost flat at 88.72 per US dollar after hitting a low of 88.80 in early trade. *—PTI*

India to increase energy trade with US: Goyal

NEW YORK, 24 SEPT

- The minister, leading trade talks in New York, said India aims to grow clean energy capacity from 250 GW to 500 GW over the next five years.

India expects to expand its energy trade with the US in the coming years, with American partnership playing a key role in achieving India's energy security goals, Commerce and Industry Minister **Piyush Goyal** said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the 'Energy Security in a Shifting Global Landscape' event hosted by the Indian Consulate in New York, USISPF, and ReNew, Goyal said: "India is a major energy importer, including from the US. We see growing cooperation ensuring price stability, diversified sources, and unlocking new possibilities."

Highlighting shared interests in clean energy, he said both nations are also planning deeper collaboration in nuclear power, adding that India is supporting private efforts and investing to double nuclear capacity in the coming years. "We must make it more competitive," he noted.

Goyal emphasised the need for resilient critical mineral supplies, cross-border transmission infrastructure, and aligned regulatory frameworks to ensure energy security isn't undermined by geopolitics. He also criticised the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), warning it could isolate the EU, hurt its economy, and reduce export competitiveness. "Green protectionism is a trap — once in, it's hard to get out," he cautioned.

The minister, leading trade talks in New York, said India aims to grow clean energy capacity from 250 GW to 500 GW over the next five years. *—PTI*

Rupee up after all-time low

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

The rupee recovered 2 paise from its all-time closing low to settle at 88.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, amid pressure from trade policy uncertainty and the recent hike in US H-1B visa fees.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 88.80 and moved within a narrow range before ending the day at 88.71. On Tuesday, it had dropped 45 paise to a record low of 88.73, with an intraday low of 88.82.

Forex traders noted continued foreign fund outflows and investor risk-aversion due to enhanced US tariffs on Indian goods and visa-related tensions.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said the rupee may remain under pressure but could find support from weaker crude prices and potential RBI intervention. The USD-INR spot is expected to trade between 88.40 and 89.25. *—PTI*

PHOTO: AI

BAJAJ BUYS MORPHY RICHARDS BRAND RIGHTS

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Bajaj Electricals, the Indian appliances manufacturer, is set to acquire the intellectual property rights for the premium home appliances brand Morphy Richards in a deal worth approximately Rs 146 crore. The board-approved transaction covers rights for India and neighbouring markets including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka.

The acquisition from Glen Electric, a part of Ireland-based Glen Dimplex Group, will give Bajaj Electricals complete ownership of the brand it has marketed under a longstanding trademark agreement. Industry observers see the move as a strategic step to strengthen the company's position in the premium segment of small home appliances.

Bajaj Electricals already retails a variety of Morphy Richards products such as mixers, air fryers, and grooming devices.

The deal ensures greater control over brand strategy, product development, and long-term growth across South Asia. *—PTI*

Gold, silver slip from record highs

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Gold and silver prices retreated from record highs on Wednesday amid profit-booking and cautious remarks from US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on interest rate cuts.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell Rs 900 to Rs 1,18,000 per 10 grams, down from Tuesday's all-time high of Rs 1,18,900. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also dropped Rs 900 to Rs 1,17,400 per 10 grams.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Silver prices dipped Rs 600 to Rs 1,39,000 per kg after soaring to a record Rs 1,39,600 in the previous session.

Analysts attributed the fall to a stronger US dollar and Powell's hawkish tone, which dampened hopes of aggressive rate cuts. Spot gold fell to USD 3,760.36 per ounce, down from Tuesday's peak of USD 3,791.11, while silver declined 0.38 per cent to USD 43.87 per ounce.

Despite the dip, ongoing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East continue to support safe-haven demand, limiting further downside.

Investors now await key US inflation and jobs data for more cues. *—PTI*

PhonePe files papers for ₹12,000 cr IPO confidentially

MUMBAI/BENGALURU, 24 SEPT

- With a current valuation of USD 12 billion following a 2023 funding round, the proposed IPO is expected to be one of the most closely watched listings in India's tech sector.

PhonePe, India's leading digital payments platform owned by US retail giant Walmart, has confidentially filed draft papers for an initial public offering (IPO) estimated at nearly Rs 12,000 crore. The company has submitted its pre-filed draft red herring prospectus to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), as well as the BSE and National Stock Exchange.

The fintech firm clarified that the filing does not guarantee an IPO will take place. However, the step follows months of preparation, including the appointment of global merchant bankers such as JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley earlier this year. In 2022, PhonePe shifted its domicile from Singapore to India, a major restructuring move involving a sizeable tax payment to Indian authorities. Analysts view this as a strategic effort to align more closely with domestic markets and regulations.

Recent filings highlight strong performance, with revenues exceeding Rs 7,000 crore in 2024–25, up 41 per cent year-on-year, while losses have narrowed. Beyond payments, PhonePe has diversified into insurance, wealth management, and financial services. With a current valuation of USD 12 billion following a 2023 funding round, the proposed IPO is expected to be one of the most closely watched listings in India's tech sector. *—PTI*

L&T and BEL partner to build India's 5th-gen stealth fighter jet

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has announced a strategic partnership with defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) to jointly develop next-generation technologies for the Indian Air Force's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) programme.

The collaboration aims to support the Aeronautical Development Agency's Expression of Interest for the AMCA, India's ambitious fifth-generation fighter jet project, which is intended to replace ageing fleets such as Mirage-2000s and Jaguars. The Indian Air Force is targeting production of 125 to 140 jets in the 2030s.

L&T will bring its expertise in strategic defence and aerospace platforms, while BEL contributes its strength in defence electronics and mission-critical systems. The consortium plans to submit its formal response to the government's Expression of Interest in the coming weeks.

Both companies have previously contributed to the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme by delivering critical avionics and aero-structure modules.

L&T, a USD 30 billion multinational, operates across engineering, EPC, hi-tech manufacturing, and services sectors.

Following the announcement, L&T shares recovered from early losses, trading at Rs 3,698 by 12:43 PM, compared to the previous close of Rs 3,658. BEL, however, faced selling pressure, trading nearly 2 per cent lower. *—PTI*

TO CREATE 600 JOBS

Coke to set up ₹2,398 cr plant in Telangana

HYDERABAD, 24 SEPT

The Telangana Cabinet Sub-Committee on Industrial Promotion has approved Rs 3,745 crore in investments from three multinational companies, expected to generate 1,518 direct jobs and boost rural incomes.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, who chaired the meeting, said Telangana is emerging as a top investment destination due to its proactive industrial policies. "These investments will provide jobs for youth and incentives for fruit farmers," he noted.

Key approvals include:

- **Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd,** which will invest Rs 2,398 crore in a large-scale plant in Siddipet, creating 600 jobs. The facility will increase demand for mangoes and oranges, directly benefiting local farmers.
- **JSW UAV** Limited will set up a drone manufacturing unit in Maheshwaram, investing Rs 785 crore and creating 364 jobs.
- **Toshiba Transmission** will establish a Rs 562 crore plant for Gas Insulated Switchgear and Bushings, generating 554 jobs.

The facility will increase demand for mangoes and oranges, directly benefiting local farmers *PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS*

Officials said Coca-Cola's presence will significantly boost the horticulture sector by ensuring reliable fruit procurement from Telangana's farmers.

Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy also reviewed recent MoUs signed at the Davos Economic Forum.

Senior officials, including Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, were present. *—ANI*

RELIANCE TO INVEST RS 1,156 CR IN TN

CHENNAI, 24 SEPT

Fast moving consumer goods major Reliance Consumer Products Ltd would invest Rs 1,156 crore to set up an integrated manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu, Minister TRB Rajaa said on Wednesday.

The facility, to come up on a 60-acre land at the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (SIPCOT) Allikulam Industrial Park in Tuticorin, would focus on multi-product manufacturing from regional snacks to biscuits, spices, edible oil among others.

Over the next five years, the factory would generate 2,000 local jobs, Rajaa, the State Industries Minister, said in a social media post.

In August 2025, Tamil Nadu conducted its maiden TN Rising Investment Conclave in Tuticorin, with the state signing 41 deals with companies that committed investments of Rs 32,553.85 crore. The MoUs have the potential to generate 49,845 jobs, the government had said. *—PTI*

Over the next five years, the factory would generate 2,000 local jobs, State Industries Minister Rajaa said *PHOTO: X/TRBRAJA*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Ashwin set to join Sydney Thunder in BBL

SYDNEY, 24

Veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is set to join Sydney Thunder for the upcoming Big Bash League, becoming the first prominent Indian cricketer to feature in the tournament. The 39-year-old, who recently retired from international cricket and the IPL, is reported to have committed to the Thunder, with an official announcement expected soon. He has also entered the ILT20 auction and is likely to join the Thunder for the latter part of the BBL season, running from 14 December to 18 January. Cricket Australia CEO Todd Greenberg personally approached Ashwin regarding his participation. The off-spinner ended a decorated career with 537 Test wickets, making him India's second-highest wicket-taker, and claimed 187 IPL wickets in 221 matches. —*PTI*

India gears up for Nepal challenge in SAFF U17 semis

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

India's unbeaten run in the SAFF U17 Championship faces a stern test as the Blue Colts meet Nepal in Thursday's semi-final at the Racecourse International Stadium. Topping Group B with nine points, India defeated Maldives 6-0, Bhutan 1-0, and Pakistan 3-2. Coach Bibiano Fernandes lauded the team's composure under pressure, especially against Pakistan. "The players showed character and discipline, which gives us confidence for the semi-finals," he said. Nepal finished second in Group A, winning 2-0 against Sri Lanka but losing 0-4 to Bangladesh. Fernandes warned of their threat, noting their talented players, and stressed the need for India to stay organised, play to their strengths, and maintain focus in the knockout stage. —*PTI*

Govt bars extra staff, tightens 2026 Asia selection criteria

Only top-ranked athletes with medal potential to be considered

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

The Sports Ministry has unveiled strict new selection criteria for India's participation in the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan, aiming to ensure only athletes with a realistic chance of winning medals make the cut.

In a five-page guideline released on Wednesday, the Ministry stated that only individual athletes ranked in the top six and teams in the top eight at the continental level will be eligible for nomination. The move is part of a broader effort to eliminate non-merit-based selections.

Significantly, the Ministry has barred inclusion of additional coaches and support staff — even at no cost to the government. "Only those cleared at cost to government will be included. No additional personnel, even on self-funding basis, will be permitted," the guideline emphasised.

The Sports Ministry has new criteria for India's participation in the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan PHOTO: ANI/WIKIPEDIA

The policy covers other multi-sport events in 2026, including the Commonwealth Games, Para Asian Games, Asian Indoor and Beach Games, Youth Olympics, and the Commonwealth Youth Games. Olympic selection is excluded, as it is governed by international federation standards.

- Significantly, the Ministry has barred inclusion of additional coaches and support staff — even at no cost to the government.

Federations can nominate athletes who have matched or bettered the 6th-place performance from the 2022 Asian Games or placed top-six in an Asian Championship within the past year. If a discipline wasn't held at the previous Games, the athlete must place in the top six at the Senior Asian Championships within the last 12 months.

The Ministry warned it would reject results from low-standard or irregular competitions seen as attempts to "circumvent rules."

For events with fewer participating teams, athletes must meet tighter criteria, such as top-two finishes if fewer than six teams competed.

The new rules could disqualify lower-ranked teams like India's men's football squad, currently ranked 24th in Asia. A relaxation clause allows exceptions based on expert review. India had its best Asian Games outing in 2023 with 106 medals, including 28 gold.—*PTI*

Ahmedabad likely to host Commonwealth

AHMEDABAD, 24 SEPT

An Indian delegation, led by Gujarat Sports Minister Harsh Sanghavi and IOA President P T Usha, has formally presented a bid in London to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad.

Marking the Games' centenary, the proposal highlights Ahmedabad's compact layout, international-standard venues, efficient transport, and quality accommodation.

Emphasising affordability, inclusivity, sustainability, and gender equity, the bid aligns with the Games Reset principles. It also pledges a long-term legacy.

The Gujarat government said the bid reflects India's values and ambition, with full support from the Centre and state, aiming to inspire youth and boost "Viksit Bharat 2047". The 2030 edition carries historic significance, marking 100 years of the Commonwealth Sport Movement. —*PTI*

ASIA CUP

It's his view: Shaheen on SKY's Indo-Pak rivalry jibe

DUBAI, 24 SEPT

Pakistan's cricket team is downplaying a growing rivalry with India as they prepare for a key Asia Cup clash against Bangladesh on 25 September. The comments come after a comprehensive six-wicket loss to their long-time rivals, with Pakistani players emphasising the need to focus on upcoming matches rather than dwell on the defeat.

Pace bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi responded to remarks from India's Surya kumar Yadav, who suggested the historic rivalry had lost its intensity due to India's dominance. "That's his view, let him say," Afridi said, stressing that Pakistan's priority is winning the tournament. He also rejected claims that his team had displayed aggression towards Indian players or fans. "There is no specific plan to be aggressive; we have always played with intensity, from the time we started," he added.

Meanwhile, all-rounder Hussain Talat denied that the loss to India had affected the team's morale, stating that the players are consciously ignoring outside criticism. Speaking after helping Pakistan secure a crucial victory over Sri Lanka, Talat expressed confidence in the team's ability to claim the trophy if they perform well in the remaining two matches. He also highlighted a lack of stability in Pakistan's middle order as a persistent issue, which he believes discourages players from taking up key batting positions. –*PTI*

- Pace bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi responded to remarks from India's Surya kumar Yadav, who suggested the historic rivalry had lost its intensity

ICC suspends USA Cricket over governance failures

DUBAI, 24 SEPT

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has suspended USA Cricket (USAC) with immediate effect, citing repeated breaches of its obligations as a member. The decision, taken by the ICC Board, follows an extensive review and long-term engagement with key stakeholders.

According to ICC, USAC failed to implement a governance structure and did not make progress towards obtaining National Governing Body status with the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee. It also noted that the actions of USAC had caused reputational damage to cricket in the US.

The ICC confirmed that America's national teams will continue to participate in all ICC events. This aims to safeguard long-term interests of the sport particularly ahead of Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

ICC will temporarily oversee management of US teams. A Normalisation Committee, headed by Jay Shah, has been appointed to determine the steps required for USA Cricket to have its suspension lifted and membership back. —*ANI*

Mohun Bagan seek venue shift

KOLKATA, 24 SEPT

Reigning Indian Super League champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant have requested the Asian Football Confederation to shift their September 30 AFC Champions League 2 fixture against Sepahan SC out of Iran, citing safety concerns.

The club has already applied for visas and made travel arrangements, but uncertainty persists over the participation of foreigners Tom Aldred, Dimitri Petratos, Jamie Maclaren and Jason Cummings, as nationals from the UK and Australia face additional restrictions in Iran. Sepahan manager, however, maintained there is no problem. "Visas have been issued to every Mohun Bagan squad member, including their foreign players. There is no issue from our side," he said. The Mariners, who lost their ACL-2 opener to Ahal FK at the Salt Lake Stadium here on September 16, clarified they are not refusing to travel, but want the AFC to address their concerns.

Failure to turn up could mean heavy sanctions and jeopardise future participation of Indian clubs in ACL 2. Last season, Mumbai City FC were forced to play in Tehran without key foreigners.

Mohun Bagan now face two back-to-back away games against Sepahan on 30 September and Jordan's Al Hussain on 21 October.

Mohun Bagan have also written to the All India Football Federation (AIFF) ahead of the upcoming Super Cup, requesting the organisers to restrict the foreign player quota to four instead of the proposed six.

It is learnt that the federation is planning to allow clubs to register and field up to six foreigners in this year's edition. In response, Mohun Bagan have urged for a cap of four to ensure greater opportunities for the Indians.

The federation had earlier permitted six foreigners in the competition, primarily because several ISL's top domestic players were away on national duty.

Mohun Bagan in their letter have cited AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey's earlier remarks in support of their stance. —*ANI*

Hardik, Abhishek, Varun dominate in ICC T20 rankings

DUBAI, 24 SEPT

Indian cricketers Hardik Pandya, Varun Chakravarthy, and Abhishek Sharma have retained their respective top positions in the latest ICC T20 rankings, reflecting their stellar performances in the ongoing Asia Cup.

Mystery spinner Chakravarthy, who claimed the top-ranked bowler spot last week, consolidated his position with a 14-point gain, taking him to 747 points. All-rounder Pandya continues to lead the all-rounders' list while also improving as a bowler, rising six places to 60th.

Among batters, Abhishek Sharma maintained his number one ranking, boosted by a quick-fire 38 against Oman and a match-winning 74 in India's chase against Pakistan. Fellow batsman Tilak Varma moved up to third after an unbeaten 30 off 19 balls in the same match. Captain Suryakumar Yadav edged closer to the top five, while Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan jumped 31 spots to 24th after hitting 58 against India.

Other notable movers include Pakistan's Hussain Talat, who surged 1,474 places to joint 234th following a composed innings against Sri Lanka. Bangladesh's Mustafizur Rahman returned to the top 10 bowlers with a six-place gain, while Saif Hassan climbed 133 spots to 81st after a match-winning 61. Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed also made another significant leap, moving 12 places up the rankings. —*PTI*

Mbappé scores twice as Madrid crush Levante 4-1

MADRID, 24 SEPT

Kylian Mbappé scored twice in three minutes, while teenager Franco Mastantuono made his scoring debut, as Real Madrid cruised to a 4-1 victory over Levante in the Spanish league on Tuesday. Vinícius Júnior also scored, helping Madrid maintain a perfect start to the season with six consecutive league wins.

Vinícius opened the scoring in the 28th minute with a neat strike into the far corner, ending a three-match goal drought. Mastantuono, 18, who joined from River Plate, struck in the 38th minute with a precise shot into the top corner. Mbappé then converted a Panenka-style penalty in the 64th minute before adding a fourth in the 66th after calmly rounding the goalkeeper, taking his tally to nine goals in seven league matches. Levante pulled one back through Etta Eyong's header, but Madrid's attacking dominance was clear. –*PTI*

Kylian Mbappe celebrates his side's fourth goal with a penalty kick during Spanish La Liga match between Levante and Real Madrid PHOTO: PTI

Afghan women to play 1st FIFA game

ZURICH, 24 SEPT

The Afghanistan national women's football team, made up of refugee players, is set to play its first official matches next month at a four-team tournament in Dubai, FIFA confirmed on Wednesday.

The FIFA-supported team, which cannot yet officially represent Afghanistan in World Cup qualifying, will face hosts the United Arab Emirates, as well as Chad and Libya, from 23–29 October. Afghanistan has not competed in an official women's match since 2018, and the return of the Taliban in 2021 led to a halt in women's sport nationwide.

FIFA said the tournament demonstrates its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of women to participate in football and pursue their ambitions. While the women's teams of Chad and Libya are currently unranked, the UAE sits at 117th. All matches will be broadcast live on FIFA's in-house streaming platform. —*PTI*

Global Chess League returns with Grandmasters

MUMBAI, 24 SEPT

World champion D Gukesh, five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, and young prodigy R Praggnanandhaa are set to be the star attractions in the player draft for the third season of Global Chess League (GCL). It is scheduled for Friday in Mumbai, ahead of the tournament in Chennai from 13-24 December.

GCL, a joint initiative of Tech Mahindra and FIDE, will feature six franchises, including defending champions Triveni Continental Kings and Ganges Grandmasters. The draft pool will have 36 players, with categories for 'Icon Players', 'Men', 'Women', 'U-21 Prodigy'. Each franchise will then build a roster of six players, with one player from each category, to compete in fixed-board format.

While the event will be without world number one Magnus Carlsen, it still features a strong lineup, including Grandmasters Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana, as well as four-time women's world champion Hou Yifan and Koneru Humpy. –*PTI*

LAKRA STEALS SPOTLIGHT

HIL: Henderson is priciest buy at Rs 42L

NEW DELHI, 24 SEPT

Australian defender Liam Henderson emerged as the most expensive buy at the Hero Hockey India League (HIL) men's mini-auction, with Vedanta Kalinga Lancers securing his services for Rs 42 lakh. Among international stars, Dutch defender Sander de Wijn drew strong bids before being picked up by Tamil Nadu Dragons for Rs 36 lakh. Germany's Thies Prinz was bought by the HIL Governing Council, which currently manages UP Rudras, for the same amount.

Teenage Indian goalkeeper Vivek Lakra stole the spotlight among domestic players. Starting with a base price of Rs 2 lakh, he was signed by Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers for Rs 23 lakh. Promising midfielder Adrohit Ekka was picked up by Tamil Nadu Dragons for Rs 11 lakh after a fierce bidding battle. Fourteen-year-old Ketan Kushwaha, the youngest in the pool, was also signed by Bengal Tigers for Rs 2.5 lakh.

Veteran drag-flicker and title-winning skipper Rupinder Pal Singh was acquired by SG Pipers for Rs 12 lakh.

The auction reflected a strong focus on nurturing young Indian talent while balancing squads with experienced overseas stars. With teams finalised, franchises now prepare to turn auction strategy into success when the HIL 2026 season begins. —*PTI*

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers bagged Australian defender Liam Henderson PHOTO: X/ Liamhenderson

- Teenage Indian goalkeeper Vivek Lakra stole the spotlight among domestic players. Starting with a base price of Rs 2 lakh, he was signed by Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers for Rs 23 lakh

Nadal flags AI videos of him giving financial advice

MADRID, 24 SEPT

Retired tennis legend Rafael Nadal has issued a warning about the circulation of fake online videos falsely showing him offering financial advice. Posting on LinkedIn on Tuesday, Nadal stressed that he has never endorsed these videos or their messages.

"I want to share this message of caution — something unusual for my social media, but necessary," he wrote. Nadal explained that, in recent days, he and his team detected AI-generated videos circulating on several platforms. These videos imitate his voice and image and falsely attribute investment advice to him, which he described as "misleading advertising, completely unrelated" to him.

Nadal also reflected on the wider challenge for society in distinguishing between real and manipulated content. He urged the public to promote "ethical and responsible use of technology," noting that while innovation can bring extraordinary benefits in education, medicine, sport, and communication, it can also be misused.

"Artificial intelligence is a tool with enormous potential," Nadal said, "but it can also create false content that confuses and deceives many people. We must remain vigilant and think critically. —*PTI*